Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic

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Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

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In memory of Marvin W. Meyer
1948–2012

now, now! quickly, quickly!

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Preface

This project began with a series of conversations between Henk Versnel and myself about what should constitute a "Guide to Ancient Magic" in a world full of Companions, Handbooks, and Guides that rarely do more than replicate their fields' traditional nomenclature and assumptions. How—we thought—might such a Guide rearrange the way this subject has been studied over the past century? While one of us (Versnel) had written extensively about a real sense of "magic" versus "religion" in ancient Greece and the other (Frankfurter) alternately shunned and reclaimed "magic" on a five-year cycle, we agreed that a Guide that moved beyond the standard overview of what magic seemed to mean in one or another culture had to be an improvement, since the very category had become highly contested.

What we envisioned was a new starting point for future investigations, essays, and dissertations in "magic," where authors could no longer get away with "using magic the way the ancient authors did," since ancient authors never used (our term) magic anyway. If the terms that magic has traditionally covered in ancient languages tended to *evaluate* ritual acts (or experts) as either ambiguous or illegitimate, then why not look at the terms and the evaluations as indigenous strategies to evaluate, censure, render exotic—that is, as *emic* discourses in various ancient cultures? And then the *texts* that we label magic and from which we build our concepts of magic—what are these texts on their own terms? Consequently does the term magic have any real utility? Many scholars have come to reject it as inevitably deviant and exoticizing; but there may be some specific areas where the term may be less harmful or alien as description—may even hold up aspects of language or materiality for critical attention. It is, after all, up to scholars, not their sources, to decide on the value and meaning of a modern category.

From the beginning the particular challenge for the authors we signed onto this project was to internalize the mandate we laid on them: to eliminate entirely the use of the English term "magic" in Part 2, and to avoid it as a predetermined category in Part 3. As the reader will see, some authors embraced the challenge; others tried to meet us half-way; others were able, over a couple of drafts, to streamline their vocabularies; and a few could not escape the seductive convenience of the term magic to designate something under discussion.

In the almost fifteen years since this project began, a number of authors had to abandon their assignments while most others hung on, dutifully adjusting their manuscripts when called upon. I convey my deep gratitude to all the authors in this volume for their extraordinary patience and commitment to

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the project. Gaps in coverage will be inevitable—the neglect of Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic sources being most glaring—but what we have produced is a start in sharpening the study of ancient magic.

This project would not have seen the light of day without the initial encouragement of E.J. Brill's Loes Schouten and the final, indefatigable copyediting and indexing of Scott Possiel. I am also grateful to John Chase's excellent translation of one article from the French; and, in the final year, regular consultations with Jacco Dieleman. Of course, the inspiration and commitment of Henk Versnel, who helped guide authors for several years, shine over this volume in every way, and I still think of GSAM as a collaborative work.

I have dedicated this *Guide* to Marvin Meyer, whose enthusiasm for this subject first inspired many of us and whose Coptic Magical Texts Project produced one of the most important publications in the field for its "de-exoticizing" of magical texts and the activities they guided: *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco, 1994). Marvin was taken much too early from this life—indeed, in the midst of revisions of his article for this volume—and he is still mourned by everyone in this field.

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Abbreviations

ACM	M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994). Reprint, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999)
AMB	J. Naveh & S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985)
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
ARG	*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*
ASE	*Annali di storia dell'esegesi*
AWN	*Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag*
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale*
CMAwR 1	T. Abusch and D. Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals*, vol. 1, Ancient Magic and Divination 8/1 (Leiden; Boston: E. J. Brill, 2011)
CMAwR 2	T. Abusch and D. Schwemer (with M. Luukko and G. van Buylaere), *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals*, vol. 2, Ancient Magic and Divination 8/2 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2016)
CMAwR 3	T. Abusch and D. Schwemer, M. Luukko and G. van Buylaere, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals*, vol. 3, Ancient Magic and Divination 8/3 (Leiden; Boston: E. J. Brill, forthcoming)
CTBS	J. Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
Dk.	*Dēnkard*
DT	A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1904)
DTA	R. Wünsch, *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae*, Inscriptiones Graecae 3, pt. 3 (Berlin: Reimer, 1887)
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain
GMPT	H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986)
GRBS	*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
H.	*Hērbedestān*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*

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JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MHD	*Mādayān ī hazār dādestān*
MSF	J. Naveh & S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993)
N.	*Nērangestān*
NGCT	D. Jordan, "New Greek Curse Tablets (1985–2000)" *GRBS* 41 (2000): 5–46
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codices
NPNF	Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers
PDM	*Papyri Demoticae Magicae*
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae*, K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2 vols. (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1928, 1931), 2nd ed., A. Henrichs, ed., (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1973–74).
RB	*Revue biblique*
REA	*Rivāyat ī Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān*
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
SDB	*Sad dar-e bondaheš*
SGD	D. Jordan, "A Survey of Greek Defixiones Not Included in the Special Corpora," *GRBS* 26 (1985): 151–197
Suppl. Mag.	*Supplementum Magicum*. R.W. Daniel and F. Maltomini, eds., *Supplementum magicum*, 2 vols, Papyrologica Coloniensia XVI, 1–2 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–92).
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
Vd.	Vendidad
Y.	Yasna
Yt.	Yasht
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

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PART 1

Introduction

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CHAPTER 1

Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions

David Frankfurter

Classicists who turn to the study of ancient magic can claim a number of forefathers: Campbell Bonner, Karl Preisendanz, Arthur Darby Nock, for example. But in the field of Religious Studies it is really Morton Smith to whom we owe the stimulation for the modern study of magic. *Jesus the Magician* so cleverly elided a category of ritual performance—"magic"—with a common accusation in the Roman world, and so effectively deleted "miracle" as a category of any real utility, that the book had scholars falling all over themselves to decry it as utterly irresponsible or acclaim it as revolutionary. "Son of God"? "Magos"?—all in the eye of the beholder.[1]

Following Smith's initial salvo in 1978, the fields of New Testament and Classics enjoyed a surge in studies of "magic" *as perceived or constructed by* classical authors like Luke-Acts or Apuleius. It was clear that these studies were motivated by a need to remove all second-order (etic) value to the term "magic," to render the term entirely the rhetorical construction of ancient authors. What does "magic" mean for the author of Luke-Acts and his presentation of thaumaturgical performance? What does "magic" mean in the Apocryphal Acts, or Theodoret, or the Theodosian Code? Whether this literary turn came from an anxiety that Jesus might ever again be called a "magician" by some prominent scholar or brazen undergraduate, or from a general suspicion of anthropology and comparative categories as useful influences on the study of ancient religions, scholarship on ancient magic entered what I might call its "resolutely emic" period by the 1990s.....[2]

1 Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981). See varying responses by Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 23–26. Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *ANRW*, II.23.2 (1980), 1523–39; Aune, "'Magic' in Early Christianity and Its Ancient Mediterranean Context: A Survey of Some Recent Scholarship," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 24, no. 2 (2007): 274–81.

2 E.g., Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*; Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

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… Except these studies tended to be far from "emic" in any real sense. If the "emic" approach to ethnographic or historical data endeavors to capture the nuances of the indigenous worldview and its categories, then these literary studies, in their *ambitions* to say something about "magic" in the ancient world, tended to depart the confines of the emic on a regular basis.[3] By claiming to study magic *as* ancient authors imagined the term or idea, these scholars would inevitably shift to talking about magic as a general category—as, say, a worldview, or a mode of deception, or rituals of a selfish nature, or a catch-all term for the Greek Magical Papyri, curse-tablets, mystery cults, and fictional images of exotic priests.[4] And behold: no more emic study—suddenly they were not only engaging in etic (second-order, outsider's) generalization, gathering more and more terms and scenarios under a category magic, but worse, they were channelling the very etic notions of magic promulgated by theologians and Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Their excuse, inevitably, was that they were simply accepting the perspectives of Lucian or Apuleius.

The casual translation of *mageia* as "magic" makes this kind of slippage or grandiosity inevitable. Whether one speaks of "magic" in Apuleius or Heliodorus or the *Acts of John*, the English term carries its own heavy and problematic valences, from Houdini and Harry Potter to Frazer and Malinowski, and it is really impossible thus to do an emic analysis using an English word.[5] We should take a leaf from Alice Donohue's brilliant study of *Xoana*—not "Idolatry" or "The Image," which would be far less precise and more grandiose titles.[6] With *mageia* all the more it is essential to keep the term under analysis at arm's length, to maintain its discrete meaning and indigenous ambiguities and prejudices and not the ones associated with "magic." To talk about "magic as the Early Christians understood it" involves exactly the deceptive elision of emic and etic that Morton Smith had so much fun with.

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3 On the widespread problem of collapsing emic and etic approaches to this topic, see Hildred Geertz, "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6, no. 1 (1975): 73–77.

4 See my reviews of Garrett: David Frankfurter, "Luke's *Mageia* and Garrett's 'Magic,'" *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 47, no. 1–2 (1993): 88–89; David Frankfurter, review of *Review of: Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, by Matthew W. Dickie, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, no. 2002.02.26 (2002), http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2002/2002-02-26.html. Cf. Aune, "'Magic' in Early Christianity," 240–44, 281–85.

5 See esp. Harold Remus, "'Magic,' Method, Madness," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999): 264–70.

6 A.A. Donohue, *Xoana and the Origins of Greek Sculpture*, American Classical Studies 15 (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1988).

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1 From "Magic" to Vocabularies of Illegitimate or Ambiguous Ritual Action

Now, it would be inappropriate to downplay the value of *consistently* emic studies of *mageia*—or *khesheph* in early Judaism, or *heka* in ancient Egypt, or *maleficium* in medieval Europe. Many recent scholars have focused specifically on the evolving senses of *mageia* and other *indigenous* terminologies: what people thought in their own worlds as opposed to what "magic" was. One might note the amount of times that Fritz Graf's *Magic in the Ancient World* needed to clarify that *mageia* is not the same as "magic."[7] Medievalists have been especially attentive to how a concept of *maleficium* forged in the world of heresiography came to be projected onto all kinds of suspect people and practices in Europe: that is, there were no "witches" or "witchcraft" *per se*.[8] In fact, we have come to realize that many cultures have terms for some ambiguous or illegitimate sphere of ritual, often associated with some "other" group or village or culture. Sometimes we imagine their rituals on a continuum with "ours"—more powerful or ambivalent in effect—and sometimes as a perversion of ours (since *they* use idols or live roosters, or invoke unsavory spirits, or speak atrocious languages).[9] But sometimes that "Other" sphere of ritual power may exert some attraction—might suggest to us, in our village, a potential supplement to our more familiar traditions and specialists, useful (e.g.) for love- and binding spells, even while we depend on our "mainstream" religious traditions to celebrate festivals and protect babies. And so also in reverse: Jesus of Nazareth, having successfully rid a demoniac and the whole region of a "legion" of demons (Mark 5)—a heroic and beneficial feat of exorcistic skill if there ever was one—consequently terrifies the populace by this very act, and they implore him to leave the area (5:17). Virtuoso acts of ritual expertise carry an ambiguous power—what could this man do if he were angry?

This sense of an ambiguous or illegitimate sphere of ritual will obviously change historically—with the introduction of new ideologies or groups—and geographically—from one village to another—even while the terminology itself might not change. *Mageia/magia* clearly assumed different meanings and valences from ancient Greece to the Roman empire, and then in Latin

7 Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 26, 30, 34, 39, 56, etc.

8 See now Ronald Hutton, "The Meaning of the Word 'Witch,'" *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 13, no. 1 (2018): 98–119.

9 Cf. David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians,'" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 173–77.

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Christian authors, Greek Christian authors, and Coptic authors. The *magoi* who visit baby Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (2:1–2) are clearly supposed to come from a different meaning system from that of Simon the "magic-performer" in the Book of Acts (8:9–12). Likewise, in worlds of anxious competition, it makes a difference if an author uses *mageia, perierga, goēs, mantis, katadesmos*, or more specific designations of illegitimate ritual pracice. They may not be interchangeable.

Now, while we should hold the study of *mageia, pharmakeia*, or other such terms to rigorously emic standards, adhering to indigenous sensibilities about their use, the observation I am making here about a cross-cultural notion of an illegitimate or ambivalent sphere of ritual is anthropological—etic—that is, generalized on the basis of comparison. I readily admit some circularity in adhering to indigenous vocabularies (emic) for a type of cultural concern I have designated on theoretical grounds (etic).[10] A truly emic approach would eschew the comparison-based, thematic association of words like *mageia* and Hebrew *khesheph* and Latin *maleficium* and instead remain only in the particular historical-cultural world that perpetually tests and applies, enlarges and diminishes such nomenclature in context. But then we are merely *in* that world we were supposed to study, with nothing particular to focus on. So, circularity notwithstanding, it is defensible to describe a cross-cultural notion of an illegitimate or ambivalent sphere of ritual. While it circumscribes what counts as worthy of discussion as an improvement on "magic," it does so in a coherent and nuanced way.

The notion of an illegitimate or ambivalent sphere of ritual embraces cultures' conceptualization of alterity itself: where is danger to be located socially, materially? Where is power to be accessed socially, materially? How do they overlap? How is this *folklore of alterity* to be designated—by what common terms?[11] "Magic" is clearly misleading, for it usually implies an historical sphere of ritual expertise or technique, while in this case we are trying to describe a caricature or stereotype. I once proposed that the practitioners of the *imagined* sphere be designated "wizards," which conveniently suggests an imagined character.[12] Others have used terms like "sorcerer"—a dangerous figure who

10 See further, Harari below, ch. 8.

11 See Michael D. Bailey, "The Meanings of Magic," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 1, no. 1 (2006): 6–9.

12 See David Frankfurter, "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors," *ARG* 2, no. 2 (2000): 162–94; David Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician'," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg, Studies in the History of Religions 75 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 130–35.

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deliberately subverts through his ritual acts—or even "witch"; but both of these terms often slide into representing real social roles or ideal types rather than a stereotype or common nightmare projected onto others. In fact, some of the most interesting research in the field of magic in antiquity has addressed this stereotype or common nightmare of the witch, moving between literary, cultural, and historical perspectives but keeping the issue entirely separate from the definition of ritual practices for binding, healing, and protecting.[13] At the same time, others have enthusiastically conflated these often misogynist caricatures with reconstructions of historical ritual expertise.[14]

So the study of wizards or witches, or *mageia* or *khesheph* or *hik* is vital, even fundamental, to the larger study of magic as long as it is done on its own *emic* terms, as the study of terminology for ambiguous or illegitimate ritual or of stereotypes and collective representations, *not* of real ritual experts, practices, or encounters. For example, it is interesting how wizards in literature, especially late antique hagiographical literature, were occasionally imagined as commanders of demons. But this is a very different question from whether and how *historical* ritual specialists in certain times and places might actually have invoked demonic forces in certain rituals.[15] We should not assume any overlap in this regard (even if, in the end, we might discover some discursive influences). So also with images of ritual compulsion and selfish demands:

13 See, e.g., Richard Gordon, "Lucan's Erictho," in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. M. Whitby and P. Hardie (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987), 231–41; Rebecca Lesses, "Exe(o)Rcising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists, and Demonesses in Babylonian Jewish Society of Late Antiquity," *JAAR* 69, no. 2 (2001): 343–75; Kimberly Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Ann Pollard, "Witch-Crafting in Roman Literature and Art: New Thoughts on an Old Image," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 3, no. 2 (2008): 119–55; Kimberly Stratton, "Interrogating the Magic-Gender Connection," in *Daughters of Hekate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. Kimberly Stratton and Dayna Kalleres (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–37; Barbette Stanley Spaeth, "From Goddess to Hag: The Greek and the Roman Witch in Classical Literature," in *Daughters of Hekate*, 41–70.

14 E.g., Matthew W. Dickie, "Who Practised Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and in the Late Roman World," *Classical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (2000): 563–83; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, chaps. 3 & passim; cf. Esther Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); David Frankfurter, "The Social Context of Women's Erotic Magic in Antiquity," in *Daughters of Hekate*, 319–39.

15 See, e.g., David Frankfurter, "Demon Invocations in the Coptic Magic Spells," in *Actes du huitième congrès international d'études coptes*, ed. N. Bosson and A. Boud'hors, vol. 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 453–66.

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wizards are *supposed* to force the *daimones* and chthonic gods into action, while priests implore and *pray*; wizards and witches offer their horrific sacrifices to fulfill selfish desires, not to protect the village from plague. These are the elements of the caricature; but to what degree are they actually generalizable to certain historical ritual experts? Probably not at all, but if we don't keep these kinds of questions separate we end up replicating all the assertions of medieval heresiographers.

2 From "Magic" to the Texts and Artifacts that Provoke the Label

Let us turn now to the corpora of texts and materials we often call magic or consider primary evidence for magic: the Greek Magical Papyri, the Coptic spells, curse tablets and binding figurines, demon-protection bowls, amulets, and so on. Here too is a subject—or range of subjects—that must be distinguished from the reconstruction of the meaning of *mageia* or *khesheph* in antiquity. New Testament scholars and classicists alike have set off to characterize ancient magic relying on a composite picture they glean from some modern collection of documents: Preisendanz's *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (2nd ed., 1973–74), Borghouts's *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (1978), Meyer and Smith's *Ancient Christian Magic* (1994), and so on. But let us be precise: none of these corpora are *mageia*, nor are they "documents of magic." In fact, calling them "magical papyri" prejudges their status as texts in society and confuses generations of students. How can "magic" be defined as "the kinds of materials and literature well known in, but not limited to, the magical papyri," when "the magical papyri" is itself a modern designation?[16]

Those so-called Greek Magical Papyri that Preisendanz (and then Daniel and Maltomini) assembled from disparate papyri largely comprise the hellenized ritual compositions of Egyptian priests in the Roman period who nowhere identify themselves as *magoi* nor their writings as *mageia*.[17] So it is a

16 Graham H. Twelftree, "Jesus the Exorcist and Ancient Magic," in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and Its Religious Environment*, ed. Michael Labahn and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 60.

17 Robert K. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and Their Religious Context," *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995): 3333–79; Frankfurter, "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors," 166–83; Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual, 100–300 CE*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005); Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

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subjective presumption to refer to these materials as indicative of what *mageia* meant in the ancient world. So also the materials that Marvin Meyer collected in the 1994 volume *Ancient Christian Magic*: far from the compositions of some historically marginal wizards in late antique Egypt, we now realize they came from the pens of monks, adroit in reorienting liturgical materials.[18] Aramaic "demon-bowls" show no subversive, exotic, or anti-rabbinic source of procurement, while the latest research on curse tablets folds them into the larger social framework of negotiating risk, anxiety, and rivalry, invariably with the help of some local scribe.[19]

All these corpora, then, are documents of specific historical subcultures: Egyptian priests in the Roman period, Syro-Mesopotamian domestic practices and Jewish rabbis, and the various encounters of social tension and writing practices in many parts of the Roman empire. But they are not documents of *mageia*. So, to return briefly to the field of New Testament studies, those books of "those who practiced *perierga*" that the author of Luke-Acts describes being burned in Ephesus (Ac 19:19) should *not* be exemplified by the corpus edited by Preisendanz for research convenience. The appearance of Seth or Anguipede imagery around the Greco-Roman world is not evidence for the widespread copying of Egyptian *grimoires* but the inner culture of gem-specialists and craftsmen.[20]

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So let us consider for a moment what we are dismantling and what maintaining in the study of ancient magic. First, it is appropriate and important to look at the construction, use, and semantic range of the various Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Coptic, and other terms that authors and jurists used in antiquity to

18 David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 257–64; Jacques van der Vliet, "Literature, Liturgy, Magic: A Dynamic Continuum," in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends in Late Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi*, ed. Paula Buzi and Alberto Camplani (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011), 555–74, and below, chap. 14. See also David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 192–211.

19 Incantation bowls: see Shaul Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells: The Case of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaec Bowls," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011), 187–217. Social and scribal context of curse tablets: see Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*; Andrew T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 200–209.

20 See below, Dasen and Nagy, Chap. 17.

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designate an ambiguous or illegitimate type of ritual work, *mageia* included. Although conceived thematically—etically—this work must be done with strict adherence to indigenous vocabulary, without glossing that vocabulary in terms of "magic." Second, it is appropriate and important to look at the construction, use, and semantic range of folklore characters—Erichtho, Pamphile, *striges*, as well as Alexander of Abonoteichos—used in literary and judicial texts to *epitomize* illegitimate ritual. Third, it is strategically possible, if carefully done, to use select English words like "witch" or "wizard" or "sorcerer" to generalize about these folklore characters *as long as* there is no mistaking the folklore nature of the term: that witch or wizard is not a social role. That is, a selected word can be used with the criterion that it can only designate a literary or caricatured figure, not a real figure in society. And fourth, as fascinating and appealing as they are for ancient historians, the Greek and demotic Magical Papyri and other like corpora are not *prima facie* evidence for *mageia*, for ambiguous or illegitimate ritual in antiquity, but only for what their authors intended in these texts and compilations; and that is a subject on its own. By the same empirical principle, lead binding tablets and curse-figurines and apotropaic bowls are evidence of specific ritual types, not *magic*. Overall, what we are calling for—and what this volume seeks to encourage—is more precision in the study of ritual, ritual power, categories of ritual, and perceptions of ritual in antiquity.

3 "Magic" as a Flexible and Heuristic Category

So what about "magic"? Can we, in the end, use this term in any meaningful way to describe some type of data? If the use of "magic" to describe what the ancient Greeks or Christians meant by *mageia* results in the inevitable channelling of Frazerian worldviews, Durkheimian dichotomies, theological prejudices, and tenuous data, must we conclude that the term's utility is exhausted? Must we abandon the term wholesale? In an important article Henk Versnel argued that we maintain an implicit sense of what counts as magic when we are selecting our data even when we try to excise the term from our vocabulary—that our unconscious definitions determine what we choose as worthy of discussion as "magic": amulets and poppets, but not spoons and hats (or processional crucifixes and Mithraic stelae). Thus we may as well keep the term in play, at least to characterize how ancient peoples discriminated areas of ritual action.[21] On the

21 H.S. Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic—Religion," *Numen* 38, no. 2 (1991): 177–97.

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other hand, Jonathan Z. Smith, in his address to the Lawrence magic conference in 1992, declared that "magic" as a second-order—descriptive—category involves an intrinsic *alterity*. It exoticizes whatever it covers and juxtaposes it to some other category of culture—whether religion, science, or reason.[22] And Smith did have a point, not only for Keith Thomas's brilliantly told but unfortunately conceptualized *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971) but even in the most recent historical scholarship. Michael Swartz's insightful study of late antique rituals to invoke the *Sar Ha-Torah* angel (in a kind of Jewish scholastic mysticism) classified these rituals as "magic" as part of an argument to *distinguish* their authors from the rabbinic elite. In a more obvious case of magic's intrinsic alterity, the archaeologist Ron Stroud classified various devotional practices and prayers in Roman Corinth as "magic" to reflect their extra-temple provenance and to juxtapose them to … the teachings of Paul.[23]

This argument of Smith's was powerful stuff when it was published, and it convinced many of us, who consequently raised the banner of the abandonment of "magic" (even while attending conference sessions and publishing in books with "magic" in their titles). The problem with Smith's argument, however, is that *all* of our principal second-order categories carry some degree of Otherness or exoticism, from "religion" (as Talal Asad notably pointed out) and "ritual" (as historians of the Reformation remind us) to "sacrifice," which mystifies and overloads the most prosaic animal-slaughter or homicide.[24] If we want all our descriptive categories to carry neutral pedigrees we won't have anything left. The more realistic goal should be to ask ourselves what is gained or lost by describing data with one etic term or another: magic or ritual, religion or tradition, book or Bible, pilgrimage or travel, and so on. If "sacrifice" seems to imply

22 Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 13–27.

23 Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Ronald S. Stroud, "Religion and Magic in Roman Corinth," in *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Sarah A. James, and Daniel N. Schowalter (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2014), 187–202.

24 Religion: Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27–54; Ritual: Peter Burke, "The Repudiation of Ritual in Early Modern Europe," in *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 223–38; Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 253–67; David Frankfurter, "Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity: Satanic Ritual Abuse, Gnostic Libertinism, and Primal Murders," *History of Religions* 40, no. 4 (2001): 352–80. Sacrifice: David Frankfurter, "Egyptian Religion and the Problem of the Category 'Sacrifice,'" in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, ed. Jennifer Wright Knust and Zsuzsanna Várhelyi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 75–93.

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the violent death of an animal or person while for most ancient folks the term *thusia* meant cakes and the occasional pig-roast, then maybe the term gives the wrong sense to private and civic ritual. If "conversion" implies a modern Protestant type of psychological transformation, then to use it for antiquity will probably distort shifts in religious adherence or allegiance. But if we use "ritual" to gather together certain traditional patterns of gesture or speech, maybe it can help make sense of important data.

So back to magic—what can it describe, moving forward? To describe as magic some unspecified component of the culture in which the New Testament came about, of course, reinscribes precisely the errors and biases of which J.Z. Smith warned and in which Morton Smith revelled. It creates an image of a crude and superstitious heathen Other against which the apostles tried valiantly to define a pure gospel—a perfect retrojection of Protestant ideology.[25] On the other hand, borrowing social definitions of magic from Durkheim, Mauss, and Malinowski that depend on a juxtaposition to "religion" doesn't carry us much further, since—as countless historians and anthropologists have shown us—the phenomenology of magical acts flows equally through so-called "religious" rites: rabbis curse, priests write amulets, monks invoke demons, sheikhs offer binding spells, and so on. Overall, any time one seeks to articulate a "non-magic," ideological bias follows, and then one is back in post-Reformation dichotomies.

One classic attempt to distinguish a sphere of magic from a sphere of religion in the ancient world was Henk Versnel's. In an important series of articles he analyzed the language of supplication and command in ritual tablets deposited at various ancient shrines to resolve various crises. To Versnel, the differing uses of language justified a distinction between a more mechanistic "magic" and a more supplicatory "religion" that involved gods. "Magic" was supposed to work by the intrinsic power of commands and words; "religion" covered appeals that, at least ostensibly, depended on the mediation and agency of gods. These were tendencies Versnel saw in the data of Greek curse tablets and votive inscriptions, and they were tendencies that, he argued, bore out how ancient Greek authors themselves envisioned two different categories of ritual speech and the cosmic dynamics each involved—long before Frazer made these dynamics fundamental to his own magic/religion distinction.[26]

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25 See Remus, "'Magic,' Method, Madness," 260–63.

26 See esp. Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic—Religion"; H.S. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60–106. Vernel's argument about the distinctiveness of prayer was first worked out in his "Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer," in *Faith, Hope, and Worship:*

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The argument is compelling, and yet it accepts perhaps too readily as a starting point the implications of written words for intentionality, belief, consistency, and the very function of spoken and written language. We must be extraordinarily careful not to get hung up on the language of ritual texts, whether in the original languages or how it sounds in translation. Where we think there is awe, humility, and a sense of ethics—or, conversely, amoral and mechanistic assumptions about selfish manipulation and command—there may simply be scribal idioms, local conventions, and a fundamental, overarching concern with efficacy on the part of a scribe. Even in oral performance "prayer" can veer between supplication and illocutionary act, especially in the realm of the curse.[27] To extrapolate an intentionality and a theological perspective on the part of the ancient client or ritual specialist, whether for prayer or magical incantation, comes down in the end to one's own imagination (and, frankly, for the world of biblical and New Testament studies, the projection of normative values). Indeed, such extrapolation—here, from the wording of inscriptions, binding tablets, magical papyri, and the such—is really not so different from how Frazer imagined how primitive folk negotiated causality in the world. Evans-Pritchard labelled this kind of speculation the "If I were a horse" fallacy: imagining sentiments and thoughts you really have no access to.[28]

So what can we do with the word "magic"? If we accept (with Versnel) that "magic does not exist, nor does religion. What do exist are our definitions of these concepts," then it is an empty category to do with what we will.[29] Does the category require an opposite—a "non-magic"—at all? This book instead proposes—in Part 4—that "magic" or "magical" can serve as a *quality* of certain practices and materials that highlights for our scholarly scrutiny features

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Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World, ed. H.S. Versnel, Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 1–64; see also H.S. Versnel, "Writing Mortals and Reading Gods: Appeal to the Gods as a Dual Strategy in Social Control," in *Demokratie, Recht und soziale Kontrolle im klassischen Athen*, ed. David Cohen and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner, Schriften des historischen Kollegs, Kolloquien 49 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002), 37–76.

27 Cf. David Frankfurter, "Curses, Blessings, and Ritual Authority: Egyptian Magic in Comparative Perspective," *JANER* 5, no. 1 (2005): 157–85.

28 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 25, 43, 47.

29 Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic—Religion," 177. Cf. J.Z. Smith's pithy observation that "religion is solely the creation of the scholars's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no indepenent existence apart from the academy," Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi.

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of materiality, potency, or verbal or ritual performance we might not otherwise appreciate as part of a culture's religious world, or aspects of the social location of ritual practices we might not otherwise appreciate. "Magic"—the category—becomes thus a heuristic tool rather than a second-order (etic) classification.

We might, for example, speak of the magical use of language to highlight the diverse functions that Austin and Searle outlined in speech-acts theory, or the multiple dimensions of ritual speech that Malinowski described in *Coral Gardens*.[30] Given that a so-called prayer can easily function as a curse, the application of the quality "magical" here does not establish hard and fast distinctions, just tendencies that are inevitable in language and culture: that songs, spoken charms, speech acts, and certain uses of narrative actually work on the world.

A more obvious situation in which we find magical characteristics is writing, a technology that lends itself almost intrinsically to ritual expressions. The magical use of writing is akin to what Sam Gill has called the "performative" use of text—in amulet and gesture—in contrast to the "informative"—for cognitive appreciation.[31] Given that in most nonliterate and semi-literate cultures texts have almost exclusively performative value, the extension to amulet, to drinking erased letters, to inscribing pseudo-hieroglyphs, represents no shift in religious domain whatsoever.

Magic in this material sense also pertains to, and highlights, the indigenization or localization of a Great Tradition. If Great Traditions like Christianity or Buddhism frame the administration and mythology of power, it is through a range of local practices, materials, and images that that power comes to be directed: the stone cross in the town as a source of sand for fecundity, the Bible as a device of divination, the altar-cloth or bell-rope as a healing substance. Magic again does not signify an erroneous (or uncatechized) understanding but rather a *shift in political and spatial dimension* of materials, formulas, and ceremonial elements and the particular charisma borne in the local domain by the symbols of broad religious institutions.

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30 J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); John R. Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," in *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, ed. Keith Gunderson, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science 7 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 344–69; Bronislaw Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1978). See below, Chap. 22.

31 Sam D. Gill, "Nonliterate Traditions and Holy Books: Toward a New Model," in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1985). See below, Chap. 23.

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"Magic" can also highlight shifts in individuals'—ritual specialists'—social location. The Greco-Roman world was awash in stereotypes of ambiguous ritual expertise and in images of the exotic powers of foreigners—like those three Babylonian *magoi* who see Jesus's birth in the stars. At the same time, we must remember that there were real priestly traditions in these cultures as well as ritual experts both local and regional: diviners, mediums, seers. What happens when, say, the traditional lector priest of some Egyptian temple or the local diviner migrates from the local culture, in which his role and practices make traditional sense, to the cosmopolitan culture? An identity and sphere of authority that was understood in intimate social terms in the local culture, or native priestly styles in the temple culture, *shift* into an exotic frame of reference in the cosmopolitan culture—a magnet for awe, fear, ridicule, and the whole Orientalist charisma of the foreign Other. The great Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield observed this shift almost a century ago in the Yucatan, as rural shamans assumed the character of wizards when they came to the cities.[32] But, as I have argued, the native or priestly ritual expert often has a hand in this shift too, *appropriating* the stereotypes projected upon him for authority and financial gain.[33]

So we might call magical the exoticized appearance of a ritual expert outside his indigenous milieu.[34] Traditional, familiar remedies, charms, and gestures come off as magical to the cosmopolitan outsider: "This I shall do," says the speaker in an early Christian novel, "I shall proceed to Egypt, and there I shall cultivate the friendship of the hierophants or prophets, who preside at the shrines. Then I shall win over a *magus* by money, and entreat him, by what they call their necromantic art, to bring me a soul from the infernal regions," in order to find out "whether the soul be immortal."[35] For the outsider Clement, all the priests are just wizards at his disposal.

32 Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of the Yucatan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941); Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt," 130–35.

33 Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 224–33; Frankfurter, "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors"; Richard Gordon, "Shaping the Text: Innovation and Authority in Graeco-Egyptian Malign Magic," in *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H. S. Versnel*, ed. H.F.J. Horstmanshoff et al., RGRW 142 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 69–112.

34 On itinerant religious entrepreneurs in general see Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

35 Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions* 1.5, in James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts, eds., *Tatian, Theophilus, and the Clementine Recognitions*, Ante-Nicene Christian Library 3 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867), 145.

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Such shifts in performative, social, and political context often take place in new cultural or economic regimes: Hellenism, Roman or Sassanian rule, and so also, anthropologists have found, developments in the modern world. New regimes, these anthropologists have found, foster a kind of magic in the new material or sensory forms of the regime—say, for antiquity, statuary, jurisprudence, and coinage; and in the modern world, televisions, magazines, currency, and clothing styles—but also in the suspicions that new regimes breed (and seek to control) in cities and countryside. At the same time, new regimes and their commodities, governments, and idioms of power tend to hide their own magical forces while at the same time promoting discourses of illegitimate ritual forces—sorcery, witchcraft—as the antithesis of the "modern" and the foil to central authority.[36]

In a likewise sociological vein we might consider the way magic can point to particular situations of social tension or struggle in which both protection and aggression are called for (and sometimes public accusation and trial). For some scholars the term magic can stimulate inquiry into the way certain ritual acts and material assemblages are produced or commissioned out of social desperation or rivalry: the curse that augments legal proceedings or follows the breakdown in some village relationships; the erotic spell that a spurned wife uses to keep her husband and thus the honor and financial security he represents, or the kind of spell a man might use to project his frustrated desires onto the woman he desires: "Let [her] not be able to sleep for the entire night, but compel her until she comes to [my] feet, loving [me] with frenzied love, with affection and with sex … do not allow her to eat, drink, sleep, or laugh but make her rush out of every place, … abandon [her family], until she comes to me, … loving me, wanting me (with a) divine, unceasing, and wild love."[37] As Jack Winkler suggested, these unquenchable feelings he seems to want *her* to suffer are, in fact, those that *he* suffers.[38]

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36 See esp. Peter Pels, "Introduction: Magic and Modernity," in *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, ed. Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1–38; cf. Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders, "Magical Interpretations and Material Realities: An Introduction," in *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 1–27. For antiquity see esp. Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas (London and New York: Tavistock, 1970), 17–45.

37 *PGM* CI = *Suppl. Mag.* 45. Cf. John G. Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

38 John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, New Ancient World (New York: Routledge, 1990), 82–98. On other crisis

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Is there a productive way to describe such ritual materials, given that their use of language and symbols lies on a continuum with other efforts at potent writing or speech in the culture, and given that they clearly *supplement* quite elaborate face-to-face efforts to gain honor, security, or gratification? To denote them as the magical aspects of the resolution of crisis is not the end of the story but the *beginning* of an inquiry into the types of ritual materials used to negotiate social tensions and frustrations—or (in the famous case of the sorcery accusation against Apuleius of Madaura) the way particular things can become marked as sorcery in the context of social tension. Is this really a question of private as opposed to public practices? Probably not, given the fact that most binding and curse spells had an inevitably public nature. Does social tension intrinsically demand a different, perhaps more ambivalent range of names, spirits, or stories to be efficacious—*daimones*, underworld powers, black cats? Are we really talking about ways of situating or performing *liminality*, according to cultural norms? How might a prevailing *culture of liminal symbolism*—all those hideous ingredients attributed to witches in Lucan and Apuleius—feed back into these kinds of rituals for negotiating social tension, in the way a contemporary adolescent who wants to curse a bullying classmate might know to include a pentagram, a skull or dead animal, and something to do with Satan? Here again we may use magic as a quality or character of a type of data—curses and erotic spells—that demands dynamic redescription in social context.

The new turn to materiality in the study of religion, picking up a theme developed in the field of archaeology, should steer us away from the intentions and ideologies that have governed the discussion of magic and towards the very substances that mediate powers and agency in the world.[39] Materiality of Religion (as opposed to "materials of religion"—a more traditional and limited archaeological approach)[40] highlights the concrete forms through which religious ideas, supernatural beings, and local traditions are felt and sensed in this world: from books to shrines, from ecclesiastical furniture to festival decorations, from figurines to costumes. This approach to religion stresses the *agency* of images and crafts, the *efficacy* of objects, the active *presence* in images, the *vitality* of repurposed things—say, baby shoes used as votive symbols—and

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contexts see Esther Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*; David Frankfurter, "The Social Context of Women's Erotic Magic in Antiquity." See below, Eidinow, Chap. 28.

39 See also Bailey, "The Meanings of Magic," 17–19.

40 On the distinction see David Frankfurter, "Afterword," in *Ritual Matters: Material Residues and Ancient Religions*, ed. Claudia Moser and Jennifer Wright Knust, Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 145–47.

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the physical practicality of written amulets. It regards the body itself not as a passive thing to be transcended or healed but as a symbolic pallette for communication with spirits and saints—through illness and inspiration, through dance and through pain. In steering us back to the things that constitute religious and social experience Materiality of Religion represents the ultimate repudiation of the Protestant legacy in Religious Studies, which had always held up the spiritual, intellectual, and transcendent as theologically superior to the idolatry of heathens, primitives, and Catholics.[41] Putting the concrete, the object, the carnal, as well as ritual "play" and bricolage at the center of religion, the material approach represents an enormous step forward in the understanding of religion in culture and human life; and in many ways it is the next step also in the appreciation of magic as more than some heathen counterpoint to apostolic Christianity. Magic, that is, becomes the element of agency and presence in objects sought out, combined, crafted, invested with mediation, deposited, worn, or placed publicly—the curse-tablet "sent" to Hekate as much as the female figurine left in a saint's shrine, the apotropaic icon of St. Simeon or the cloak of a deceased prophet as much as the plaque with the "suffering eye" outside one's door, and certainly the amulet containing scripture phrases as much as the bright red gem displaying the Anguipede symbol. In all such cases it is the agency in the material object that is felt to protect, communicate, heal, or curse.[42]

Finally, the term magic can aid us in describing or redescribing certain verbal or material *aspects* of rituals that are otherwise defined as immaterial or transcendent in orientation: what we usually classify as mysticism or theurgy. Ancient mystical programs typically involved the recitation of sacred names, sounds, repetitive verses and images, and an illocutionary force to declarations and descriptions. That is to say, the declaration establishes the situation. Permeating apocalyptic literature, Gnostic literature, and many other esoteric liturgical traditions, these linguistic features and functions should not be called magical in and of themselves.[43] We gain nothing by using the term magic simply for the language of mysticism. But magical might refer helpfully to the particular uses to which certain types of language and gesture were put in mystical programs. And it might also refer to the *materials* that serve

41 See esp. Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category."

42 See Chapter 24, as well as Wilburn in Chapter 18.

43 See Rebecca Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*, Harvard Theological Studies 44 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998); Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity*, Magic in History (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

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or are created through these rituals: the liquids and substances and sounds that serve the acquisition of visions, or mediate between the heavenly and human worlds. In this area of mysticism one might think of the *Iynx* wheel that the theurgist would whirl to create supernatural sounds; or the names and symbols affixed on the body for heavenly ascent in apocalyptic and Gnostic texts; or (on the other hand) the amulets and the ritual knowledge that one is said to gain *through* rituals of ascent to heaven (like the "white stone" with the secret name on it, promised by the prophet in the Book of Revelation, 2:17).[44] *Sefer Ha-Razim* is the paramount example of these verbal or material results of visionary ritual. It is not "magical" because it recommends specific formulas and spells for practical purposes but rather because it derives material applications and ritual powers from apocalyptic ascent.[45]

In all these ways the category magic might have some utility as long as we justify it for particular types of data—not as a loose or lazy generalization for whatever seems weird, manipulative, or selfish in orientation (and especially not as a foil to Jesus or Paul). As a heuristic term it can highlight—for further analysis—material aspects of ritual, local applications of official ritual, and shifting evaluations of traditional religious figures or rites. We can use it as a quality or aspect of ritual or a domain in which rituals might be directed. In these contexts the word carries a helpful qualitative sense—sometimes akin to "numinousness" or "charisma," "agency" or "presence," "potency" or "liminality," in all the ways these words have been loaded in the humanities; and sometimes characterizing shifts in status or the materiality of social crises. In these different ways, the self-conscious use of magic and magical can also encourage intellectual responsibility for the history of ideological misuses of these terms—misuses that tend to be replicated by scholars who imagine themselves pure by eliminating the term magic. As the anthropologists Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw observed with the contested term *syncretism*, "embracing a term which has acquired—in some quarters—pejorative meanings can lead to a more challenging critique of the assumptions on which those meanings are based than can its mere avoidance."[46]

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44 Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 179. On mysticism and theurgy see below, Janowitz in Chap. 25 and Johnston in Chap. 26.

45 Michael A. Morgan, trans., *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries*, SBL Texts and Translations 25 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983). On this text see below, Chap. 16.

46 Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart, "Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism," in *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, ed. Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart (London: Routledge, 1994), 2.

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Yet invariably, and appropriately, scholars will leave the category magic behind as, in the end, unnecessary to the description or classification of some phenomenon: the use of mysterious words and sounds to drive an incantation, for example. While helpful initially to highlight aspects of phenomena, the term "magic" remains too vague to rely on as a genuine second-order category of description—for magic as described here essentially permeates human language, material lives, and social interactions. Ultimately the term should point us to something more fundamental in all the religions of antiquity (and beyond): that what we call religion inevitably revolves around the image and the amulet, the assemblage and the inscribed letters, the shrine and the body. Still, the term helped us to get there—to raise the questions.[47]

47 See Michael L. Satlow, "Disappearing Categories: Using Categories in the Study of Religion," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 17, no. 4 (2005): 293–95.

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CHAPTER 2

The Plan of This Volume

David Frankfurter

This *Guide* is meant to flesh out a vision for the study of magic encapsulated in the preceding essay. It is a "Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic" rather than "A New Approach to Ancient Magic" because its conceivers and authors would like this volume to standardize presuppositions in such a way that future work in this area will begin from the same place. It is our hope that future scholars in this area will not feel the need to define magic "as the Romans imagined it" or as part of or different from "religion" but to move on to the material or social dynamics suggested as magical in Part 4 or to focus on discourses of ambiguous/illegitimate ritual (without use of magic as a translation) as described in Part 2, or conversely to examine texts and artifacts with ritual or apotropaic implications as described in Part 3—again, independently of a category magic.

Thus this *Guide* does *not* provide articles on "Magic in Ancient Judaism" or "Magic in the New Testament." The time has passed when such articles contributed anything but fuzzy amalgamations of negative stereotypes of the Other with uncritical efforts to define something essential about magic as separate from religion. Even when books are published with magic in the title there often follow extended apologies for using a loaded and exoticizing term that bears little resemblance to the indigenous categories discussed or to the phenomena that might pertain to such a category.[1] (It is notable that the scholar most associated with the field of "magic in early Christianity" ultimately repudiated the use of the term in print.)[2]

Nor will the *Guide* offer a review of the last two centuries of etic, or second-order, thinking about magic as a category in anthropology, religious studies, comparative literature, theology, and so on, for the contribution we hope to make is to phenomena in Mediterranean and Near Eastern antiquity. A larger, more comprehensive field of "magic studies" has blossomed across the

1 Cf. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*; Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

2 David E. Aune, "The Use of the Term 'Magic' as a Socio-Religious Category i the Study of the Greco-Roman World and Early Christianity," in *To Set at Liberty: Essays on Early Christianity and Its Social World in Honor of John H. Elliott*, ed. Stephen K. Black, The Social World of Biblical Antiquity, 2nd ser., 11 (Sheffield [England]: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 15–26.

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humanities in recent years, with a prestigious book series[3] and journals like *Preternature* and *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, all encouraging the interdisciplinary study of phenomena across historical periods and literatures. At the same time, a number of historians have placed the legacy of the category magic in broad critical perspective: a legacy from antiquity that evolved through the Reformation to become an essential, if deceptive, part of modern thinking.[4] That is to say, the critical analysis of the modern history of the word "magic" is well under way, and it need not be addressed in this book. Our attention is instead directed towards the problems and interests in ancient materials and the theoretical challenges that they occasion. I readily acknowledge that critical historians of magic through history—who invariably conclude that the term is irredeemable for descriptive purposes—may not agree with this *Guide*'s offer of "flexible" uses of magic as a quality or dynamic. Yet this strategy seems more productive with the texts and artifacts of antiquity than the elimination of the term entirely—a tactic that, as Henk Versnel has observed, ends up creating magics by other names.[5] Overall, adjusting the parameters and nomenclature of academic fields is a complex process, and a focus on antiquity is both defensible and realistic in that regard.

The three parts of the *Guide* that follow this Introduction are thus conceived both to move the larger field loosely focused on ancient magic beyond its preoccupations with the legitimacy and historical uses of magic and to adhere more closely to the principles of emic (indigenous, insiders') and etic (second-order, outsiders') description than prior studies have followed. **Part 2** looks at cultural constructions of ambiguous or unsanctioned ritual as a field of ethnoclassification, conceptualized differently in different cultures and periods according to institutional or legal predilection, local/institutional interactions, and historical circumstances. Those "different cultures and periods" represented in Part 2 are, to be sure, not exhaustive—nor, some will argue, are they representative, since they maintain essentialist parameters ("Jewish", "Early Christian", "Greek") even if the authors themselves are more nuanced, and they leave out discourses from Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Arabic/Muslim

3 *Magic in History*, Penn State University Press.

4 Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Bernd-Christian Otto, *Magie, Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analysen von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit*, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 57 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); Bernd-Christian Otto, "Towards Historicizing 'Magic' in Antiquity," *Numen* 60 (2013): 308–47; Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg, eds., *Defining Magic: A Reader*, Critical Categories in the Study of Religion (Sheffield: Equinox, 2014).

5 Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic—Religion."

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sources (for reasons of expediency, not purpose). Be that as it may, authors in this section were asked to cleave closely to indigenous nomenclature (*magia, heka, khesheph*, etc.) and to eschew the term "magic" as much as possible—as a translation, a generalization, or even as a misleading modern concept. Their mandates were to expose the reader as much as possible to indigenous vocabulary for illegitimate and ambiguous ritual acts and the discourses and fears that organized this vocabulary. Whereas some scholars have argued for a distinction between popular and "learned" notions of illegitimate or ambiguous ritual—that is, putting authors like Plato, Theocritus, Plutarch, and Augustine on a separate discursive level from folk conceptions—in this volume such authors are treated as fully members of the field of emic perspectives.

Now, as I admit in "Ancient Magic in a New Key," above, to conceptualize the topic in this way—"cultural constructions of ambiguous or unsanctioned ritual"—is to impose an "etic" (outsider's) framework on cultures: to put it crudely, we decided what material would count as an emic approach to magic. But it is defensible as a way of thinking about where in cultures the terms and ideas often gathered or translated as "magic" arose. To be sure, it is an etic assertion that these cultures maintained such notions—these verbal, folkloric, and even legal alternations between fantasy and fear, exoticism and condemnation—but that very etic assertion sets in motion an effective type of discussion of emic perspectives.

Of course, the broad scopes of these chapters may be criticized as too broad to reflect anything like an indigenous perspective. Fritz Graf's epigraphical work has uncovered highly localized situations in the Mediterranean world in which a plague or an untimely death triggers inquiries into *maleficium* or the use of *pharmakeia*: the kinds of small-scale social crises in which such words and fears usually live. And yet those who framed crises in these local cases relied on generally recognized terms for illegitimate ritual acts: they drew on traditions and discourses of ambiguous or unsanctioned ritual.[6] Or else they did not draw on such discourses or vocabulary, and misfortune and social tension were resolved in other ways. For example, when Pliny investigates "the contagion of that *superstitio*" (i.e., Christians) in early II CE Bithynia (Asia Minor), despite some concerns about their ceremonies, a vocabulary associated with illegitimate ritual acts never arises.[7] And when Gemellus Horion complains formally to the Roman strategos in late II CE Karanis (Egypt) that his neighbor sought to "hem him around with malice" by throwing a stillborn

6 Fritz Graf, "Untimely Death, Witchcraft, and Divine Vengeance: A Reasoned Epigraphical Catalog," *ZPE* 162 (2007): 139–50.

7 Pliny, *Ep*. 10.96.9.

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fetus at him, he does not accuse his neighbor with *mageia, pharmakeia*, or like words for unsanctioned and antisocial ritual acts, even though he is trying to appeal to Roman jurisprudence.[8] These cases suggest the ultimately idiosyncratic application of the words and ideas discussed in this first section, even while the discourse was available, recognizable, and could be explosive if deployed in the right circumstances.

Part 3 addresses the texts and artifacts historically called magical—and for some scholars actually serving as the basis of definitions of magic.[9] But what *are* these materials? Do their authors or craftsmen present them as in any way exotic, subversive, or antithetical to religion or civil society? If they consist of ritual instructions, like the so-called Greek Magical Papyri, how do they differ from ritual instructions in other religions of the ancient world? This section is not meant so much to critique the history of interpretive scholarship on these texts and artifacts as to help readers understand what these materials actually were and how we—historians of religion, biblical scholars, classicists—might actually make use of them.

And while the authors here were not, as in Part 1, enjoined from using "magic" as a term of convenience, most left it behind as they focused on the nature of the artifacts or documents. Instead of magic there are amulets (including gems) for healing and protection, figurines for ritual focus and gestures, inscribed bowls for protection from demons, and of course, ritual manuals. These manuals *may* have been used as libretti for performance, but they may also have been composed or translated in a nostalgic literary vein unrelated to practice or performance, or to substantiate a codex or scroll with interesting contents, or to collect and edit popular charms and remedies from local culture. Inasmuch as their practical or editorial use required literacy, sometimes an arcane priestly literacy, any assumptions we might make about what they were for or what they signify historically should require a full account of what kinds of people might have held that kind of literacy: priestly (or rabbinic, or monastic) experts? General literati? As I explain in the Introductory Essay above, we must avoid taking published collections like Betz's *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, or Kropp's *Ausegewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, or Naveh and Shaked's *Magical Spells and Formulae* as veritable Bibles of Magic—as canons that offer uniform pictures of a subcurrent of antiquity. Each individual

8 P. Michigan 6.423–24; see David Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt," *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62.

9 E.g., Twelftree, "Jesus the Exorcist," 60.

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papyrus, or codex, or bowl, or amulet, or bunch of leather strips is its own product, with discrete authors, interests, and contexts.

Part 4 returns to magic as an etic, second-order category, but not to offer a definition, scope, or theory of magic. Instead, these essays are experiments in using magic as a quality or dynamic of words, texts, artifacts, persons, ritual procedures, or social situations. In these essays magic is not characterized against some "non-magic" (like "religion" or rational instrumentality) but—in the spirit of such classic terms as charisma or numinosity—as a term that might be used on its own to enlarge our understanding of how things might have been regarded and treated in antiquity. It is etic in the sense that it is our term to apply tentatively and critically to indigenous uses of things or indigenous attitudes toward situations, regardless of indigenous nomenclature. Indeed, one might go further in justifying magic as an etic category, even despite its long legacy of exoticizing its subjects, for to embrace a critically suspect category makes one responsible to its legacy of misuses. Simply to replace or avoid "magic," by this reasoning, allows the unwitting perpetuation of the old errors in new guise, whereas keeping the term in play for select purposes requires conscientiousness.

The essays on "Dimensions of a Category Magic" are indeed experiments in select cultural and textual domains, and the reader will have to weigh for herself how much in each case the category enlarges on a type of artifact or situation. Many scholars have simply dispensed with magic completely, preferring to discuss situations of binding or cursing, or apotropaia, or the distribution of charisma, or folk-healing. Magic is often unnecessary outside the thematic or comparative modes in which these essays operate. In the incident to which I referred earlier, in which Gemellus Horion complains that his neighbor has twice thrown a fetus in his direction to "hem him around with malice," the term magic could capture the notion of the agentive fetus (part of an assemblage, no doubt), the verbal/gestural context of "hemming around with malice," or—as Eidinow would imply in her essay—the larger social context in which village tensions devolved into sorcery and sorcery-accusations.

In the end, this volume endeavors to clarify the study of ancient magic by dispensing with general studies of "magic in early Christianity" or "magic in ancient Egypt" and dividing the subject into more profitable areas: the discourse of illegitimate or exotic ritual in a culture; the materials from which we draw our impressions of a magic; and broader areas of culture or language or social status that might be illuminated by reference to something called magic. This division should encourage scholars to be both more rigorously philological—avoiding facile translations for culturally-loaded words—and,

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in a way, more anthropological, in imagining areas of culture and practice that suggest magic as a second-order term or, on the other hand, that impelled people in history to react with their own loaded categories. It is to be hoped that these fields, interests, and materials continue to grow, gain in sophistication and authority, lose their occasional academic stigma, and establish interconnections across fields once undisposed towards "magic." It is my hope that this *Guide* offers a way for this kind of responsible interdisciplinarity.

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PART 2

Cultural Constructions of Ambiguous, Unsanctioned, or Illegitimate Ritual

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CHAPTER 3

Introduction

David Frankfurter

As "Ancient Magic in a New Key" (chapter 1) explains, "magic" does not properly translate any indigenous terms in any ancient culture. It certainly has played a role in modern western anthropology and philosophy—as the antithesis of science, religion, and rationality itself—and in that respect carries its own intellectual history, its own construction of alterity.[1] But magic in its modern sense has little in common with the vaguely cognate terms to which it is applied in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Egyptian, and so on.

Still, the indigenous terms that magic has historically translated tend to *function* in a similar way across the ancient cultures. In a general sense, these terms work as part of a flexible and evolving vocabulary for ritual practices (and their specialists) that some cultural institutions or movements deem ambiguous or even illegitimate. Different cultures, their religious leaders, priesthoods, or state authorities will variously imagine forms of subversion, enmity, or improper ceremonial practices either out on the cultural periphery (what "those people" do) or within society—dangers akin to our term sorcery or even witchcraft. These dangers may comprise the very forces that the central priesthood claims to be able to dispel or obliterate (as Schwemer, for example, shows below with Mespotamia).[2] And those things that are felt to instigate danger or subversion (in the case of *mageia* or *pharmakeia*) or that have the potential to disrupt a person or society itself (in the case of Egyptian *heka*) tend to involve some sort of ritual practices and their material assemblages. Of course, the vocabulary to which I refer designates *ambiguous* ritual as well: assemblages and powers that can bind, heal, protect, invoke, attract, and reveal

1 Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg, eds., *Defining Magic: A Reader*, Critical Categories in the Study of Religion (Sheffield: Equinox, 2014). Otto has written extensively about the ancient legacy in the modern conceptualization of "magic": see, e.g., Bernd-Christian Otto, "Towards Historicizing 'Magic' in Antiquity," *Numen* 60 (2013): 308–47.

2 See also David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians,'" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 173–77, and David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), chap. 2.

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truths in a desirable, even necessary way, but that can be taken (in popular legend and learned declaration) in nefarious directions, or that come from ritual specialists who sometimes work "with the left hand." It is a characteristic of all the terms discussed in this section that they occasionally are discussed in fearful or negative terms. But the common element is the relationship of the terms to ritual practices.[3] In other words, I have chosen to associate indigenous terms for ambiguous or illegitimate ritual as most pertinent to understanding the concepts and vocabulary that underlie what modern scholars have tried to designate as "magic."

These images of ambiguous or illegitimate ritual and the vocabulary that labels it belong to the realm of the discursive, not—or only rarely—to the realm of the local practitioner or folk, who may never characterize ritual practices as belonging to any general category (least of all, one of potential condemnation). That is to say, most ritual practices take place situationally, without clients' or performers' need or impulse to objectify the practices discursively. One does not "do sorcery"; one appeals to a local specialist to resolve an untenable social crisis with finality. What is more, the discursive terminology discussed in the following chapters belongs to the world of *texts*: that is, priesthoods, rabbis, monks, and state authorities charged with protecting regions from illegitimate and subversive ritual practices. In this regard, without supporting details we cannot use these terminologies as a window into "real" practices on the ground but only as the learned construction of danger, mysterious powers, and impure ceremonies. What we learn from these vocabularies are the types of practices, materials, agencies, and bodies that authors deemed ambiguous or dangerous.[4]

Thus while Roman authors (Bailliot) fixated on evil charms, material remedies, and the propriety of sacrifices, Mesopotamian priestly exorcists (Schwemer) conceptualized an antithetical type of sorcerer or ritual expert whose rites would bind, pollute, and afflict a patient, and early Zoroastrian priests (De Jong) conceptualized an anti-religion of impure sacrifices as well as the general social and cosmic implications of impure or erroneous ceremonies.

3 Although "ritual" is by no means a self-evident category of human expression, the authors in this section have been allowed to assume their own definitions of ritual to derive the relevant emic vocabulary. On the modern semantics of this term see Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); David Frankfurter, "Ritual as Accusation and Atrocity: Satanic Ritual Abuse, Gnostic Libertinism, and Primal Murders," *History of Religions* 40, no. 4 (2001): 352–80.

4 Thus the authors in this section of the Guide have all endeavored to hold "real" popular practices—binding, self-protection, etc.—at a distance; the matter at hand remains what ideology and vocabulary had developed to imagine ambiguous and illegitimate rituals.

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A preoccupation with Otherness—the foreign rite, the deceptive prophet, even the world of women—likewise characterizes early Jewish materials (Harari) and gets progressively defined in late antiquity in terms of demonic teaching, the "Ways of the Amorites," and (still) the practices of women. In Dieleman's essay we see that Egyptian priests' sense of *Heka*—that is, the power of ritual procedures that comes from the gods and drives the cosmos—was indeed ambiguous, as foreigners' sorcery and divine afflictions involved this power as well. In Greece, as Graf explains, a range of labels for ritual expertise—*magos, mantis, goēs*, etc.—captured different sorts of techniques in charming, divining, binding, sacrificing, healing, and so on. These techniques were, again, alternately beneficial or subversive, peripheral or familiar; but in Christian literature the same terms took on a more consistently sinister air, as Sanzo describes in his comprehensive essay.

The earliest texts in Sanzo's discussion are, of course, rooted in Jewish frames of reference, yet they draw on Greek vocabulary. Thus *mageia* and *perierga* contribute to a picture of rival ritual specialists as greedy showmen. But it is in the early list form—Jewish in origin but proliferating in early Christian literature—that we see ambiguous ritual practices drawn together and classified as illicit using the more "material" term *pharmakeia* rather than *mageia*. Such lists combined illicit ritual with sins, implying demonic origins for all the listed inclinations and practices that pollute mankind (much as the Watcher angels were supposed to have introduced to women the casting of spells, the cutting of roots, and the release of spells: 1 En 8.3).[5] As demonic teachings passed down, illicit ritual practices were thus associated with *books* in much Christian literature: *mageia* and *pharmakeia* are performed according to books; the great *magos* is known by his books; and if a community finds and burns books of *mageia* it is effectively eliminating the dangers of illicit ritual practices.[6] The sweep of these learned Christian efforts to list proscribed practices, even without the label *mageia*, could sometimes involve more "ethnographic" observations of popular culture, as some ancient authors included *phylakteria* and other apotropaic practices, *phthonos*, obscure evil-eye beliefs, and specific binding practices in their depictions of ambiguous and illegitimate ritual. This we see especially in the Coptic materials, which were obviously heir

5 See esp. Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enoch Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

6 See also Dirk Rohmann, *Christianity, Book-Burning, and Censorship in Late Antiquity: Studies in Text Transmission*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 135 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016).

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to a great range of literary tropes but some of which had an interest in more curious examples of illicit popular practice (Van der Vliet).[7]

Across these various discourses and conceptualizations of ambiguous and illegitimate ritual (and across some very different cultures) we can observe a number of common ideological variables, circumstances, and motifs. First of all, there is the conception of the *media* involved in ritual acts and their agency, controlled or uncontrolled. Does a text imagine ambiguous or illegitimate ritual as intrinsically involving some supernatural being—a god or spirit invoked to serve the client, a demon who will eventually claim power over the specialist—or does the danger in the ritual act lie in its intrinsic capacity to disrupt or bind? Does the power—ambiguous or illicit—lie more in the barbarous words of the rite, the source of the rite (some book of spells?), the materiality of the rite (sacrifices, strange assemblages?), or the goals of the rite (binding, protecting, divining)? In the view of the second-century CE *Shepherd of Hermas, pharmakoi* carry their *pharmaka* in little boxes: a particular materiality of ritual danger.[8] Different writers and different communities envision danger in different aspects of ritual practices.

Secondly, it is clear that for some traditions the motivation and overriding concern in representing ambiguity and danger lie in the depiction of the *Other*—as both ritually empowered and dangerous: Jews, heathens, non-Zoroastrians, the mythical "Amorites," and of course Persian *magoi* all fall under this pattern. As Harari and Sanzo show, the very same practices (verbal, gestural, material) customary to insiders are illegitimate and dangerous when performed by others. In some traditions, it is particular dangers envisioned in cities and communities that motivate the labelling and conceptualization of ritual subversion: binding rites to seduce women or harm livestock, divination, the sending of demons. In still others what motivates the accumulation of terms and nefarious images of ambiguous ritual practices is the scribe's effort to embed those practices among sins (and vice versa), such that ambiguous/illicit ritual practices function as cumulative evidence of a widespread state of impurity: here we might think of the Jewish, then Christian listing traditions.

Thirdly, it is a question how real ritual specialists, such as we can deduce or imagine their historical existence in a culture, incorporated a discourse of

7 See also David Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," in *Late Ancient Christianity: A People's History of Christianity*, ed. Virginia Burrus, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 255–66. Although from a very different perspective on *magia* and its meanings, the merit of Valerie Flint's 1994 study lies in her thematic organization of precisely such ecclesiastical takes on popular practices: Valerie I.J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

8 *Shepherd of Hermas Vis*. 17 (1.III.9).

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ambiguity or illegitimacy into their own practices. Classicists are ever on the lookout for uses of *mageia*/*magia* among the grimoires of the Greek or Coptic Magical papyri in the hopes that a *magos* might eventually self-designate; but this phenomenon is altogether rare.[9] There are other ways, however, that ritual specialists cross-culturally and through history have functioned on the margins of authoritative discourses of illegitimate ritual, shifting ostentatiously outside the world of legitimate ritual to advertise their range of powers or moving inside through the careful use of legitimizing markers in their ceremonies and texts.

Another pattern is more clearly social. What circumstances engender these discourses? With some religious movements we can see the impact of sectarian boundaries on scribal efforts to identify ritual practices that are out of bounds or demonic in nature. On the other hand, individual temples seem to have had an interest in conceptualizing a sphere of dangerous ritual, sorcery, that they alone could oppose or exorcise. Mesopotamia clearly falls under the latter pattern, and Dieleman's discussion of the Oracular Amuletic Decrees from an Egyptian temple of the Third Intermediate Period offers a case of extensive lists of supernatural and ritual dangers, often identified as foreign in origin, from which the temple god could specifically protect people. Prophetic, sectarian, and enclave movements, on the other hand, concerned as they are with the maintenance of a polarized world with no crossover, will identify and proscribe types of ritual practice that signify outsiderness. Early Jewish and Christian lists often reflect such a worldview, as do legends (as in the Gospels, Acts, and Apocryphal Acts) that associate ambiguous ritual practices with heathen outsiders.

The literary depiction of ambiguous and illegitimate ritual in legends—novels, martyrologies, saints' lives, rabbinic stories—has always offered a rich source for the study of this discursive phenomenon. In such stories ambiguous practices are rendered altogether demonic, while illicit practitioners can come off as buffoons in juxtaposition to apostles, rabbis, and holy men. Van der Vliet devotes considerable attention in his essay to these dramatic juxtapositions, in which holy man and illicit ritual specialist are duelling opposites, the saint pure and commanding, the sorcerer arrogant and even pathetic.[10] Narrative depictions from an earlier time, like the Egyptian Setne-Khamwas stories, the

9 Uses of *magos*/*mageia*, whether for stereotype appropriation (self-exoticization) or as a translation of Egyptian *heka*, is almost entirely restricted to the Paris Papyrus (PGM IV): ll. 243, 2081, 2289, 2319, 2449. Cf. P. Derveni col. VI and P. Macquarie I, 14.

10 See also Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 59–61; and David Frankfurter, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 3/4 (2001): 480–500.

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Alexander-Romance, and Heliodorus's *Aethiopica*, fleshed out the picture of the *ambiguous* ritual expert: one who could bind opponents, seduce women, converse with and control diverse spirits, and draw on an extensive, book-based lore.[11] No doubt other cultures had similar literary characters, invariably priests of some sort, whose awesome, even terrifying ritual skills made them heroic rather than stock sorcerers.

In this respect the literary depiction of ambiguous ritual and its powers through these super-priests provides an interesting contrast to literary depictions of malicious sorcery through *female* characters in Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures. This topic has rightly earned much attention in recent years, as scholars have variously focused on the misogyny involved, the inheritance of night-witch traditions in representations of female sorcerers and witches, reflections of real women's practices, and specific details that arise with particular authors and cultures.[12] One might consider further the ways that all these literary characters contributed to broader cultural discourses in which ritual practices and ritual expertise—whether of priests or local grandmothers—are subjects of admiration *and* concern, fear *and* disgust, civic investment *and* legal proscription, such that the literary characters have the potential to embody, in the popular imagination, the vocabulary of ambiguous and illegitimate ritual.

Each of the authors in this section has strived to cover this complex assignment without recourse to the word magic and with a curiosity into the very

11 Fulvio De Salvia, "La Figura del mago egizio nella tradizione letteraria greco-romana," in *La Magia in Egitto ai tempi dei faraoni*, ed. Alessandro Roccati and Alberto Siliotti (Modena: Panini, 1987), 343–65.; David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 217–37; Ian S. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chap. 4; Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual, 100–300 CE*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005), 221–54.

12 Richard Gordon, "Lucan's Erictho," in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. M. Whitby and P. Hardie (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987), 231–41; Sarah Iles Johnston, "Defining the Dreadful: Remarks on the Greek Child-Killing Demon," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 361–87; Richard Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 204–10; Rebecca Lesses, "Exe(o)rcising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists, and Demonesses in Babylonian Jewish Society of Late Antiquity," *JAAR* 69, no. 2 (2001): 343–75; Kimberly Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Ann Pollard, "Witch-Crafting in Roman Literature and Art: New Thoughts on an Old Image," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 3, no. 2 (2008): 119–55; Kimberly Stratton and Dayna Kalleres, eds., *Daughters of Hekate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

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range of words and images that captured—or sustained—a discourse about ambiguous and illegitimate ritual in the particular culture. Their efforts here are preliminary; there is clearly far more that can be said at the level of cultural discourses about ritual as well as in application to new texts and artifacts. Furthermore, the very scope of these chapters—"Early Judaism," "Greece," "Mesopotamia"—could be perceived as essentialist, even if the authors themselves offer exceptional nuance. Readers should keep in mind that most places in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean worlds drew on a combination of such discourses of ambiguous/illegitimate ritual when the issue came up. In the end, this section—like the *Guide* as a whole—can only set the stage to motivate further research.

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CHAPTER 4

Mesopotamia

Daniel Schwemer

This chapter surveys forms of ritual that people in ancient Mesopotamia considered dangerous and potentially harmful. Some of these practices were prohibited by law, others occasionally frowned upon as ambiguous, even though they formed part of the written tradition. The discussion includes rituals that practitioners performed regularly, but also rites that existed foremost as cultural constructions of evil ritual as a potential cause of illness and misfortune. The overview first delineates the wider context of ritual lore in Babylonia and Assyria, focussing in particular on the profession of the *āšipu*. It then describes the ideas and concepts associated with *kišpū*, the Akkadian term for malevolent and taboo ritual acts, and includes a discussion of the stereotypical female perpetrator of *kišpū*. Further sections examine the ambiguity of some ritual practices, in part due to competing interpretations and differing perspectives. Finally, the survey turns to the question of the relevance and validity of evil ritual as a cultural narrative, especially in the context of the currents of continuity and change in the societies of first-millennium Mesopotamia.[1]

1 The Revulsion of a Pig

Kiṣir-Nabû was a young ritual expert in Aššur, the ancient capital of Assyria, today the site of Qal'at Sherqat on the western bank of the Tigris River in northern Iraq. He lived in the second half of the seventh century BCE and was the scion a distinguished family of scholars whose special area of expertise

1 The discussion here is mainly based on second- and first-millennium sources from Mesopotamia. For surveys of broadly the same topic that cover a wider area of ancient Near Eastern cultures and deal, to some extent, also with third-millennium sources, see D. Schwemer, "The Ancient Near East," in *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West. From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. D.J. Collins (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 17–51, and D. Schwemer, "Quellen des Bösen, Abwehrrituale und Erfolgsrezepte: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer Systematik der babylonisch-assyrischen Magie," in *Zauber und Magie im antiken Palästina und seiner Umwelt. Kolloquium des Deutschen Vereins zur Erforschung Palästinas*, ed. J. Kamlah, R. Schäfer and M. Witte, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 46 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 13–40.

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was called *āšipūtu* or *mašmaššūtu*. This branch of knowledge, which generally commanded high respect in society, concerned the diagnosis, therapy and prevention of complex illnesses and other adversities. *Āšipu*-experts like Kiṣir-Nabû or his uncle and mentor Kiṣir-Aššur were familiar with the traditional rituals and tools of their trade; they had memorized many of the relevant Sumerian and Akkadian recitations and possessed a keen understanding of the materials required in the performance of rituals or in the production of remedies.[2]

One day, Kiṣir-Nabû was approached by a man who suffered from impotence. The young *āšipu* considered the application of a potion and a phylactery suitable for curing the ailment. He was, however, reluctant to administer the therapeutics without having determined the ulterior cause of the man's deficient potency. Therefore, he decided to undertake a diagnostic divination procedure before mixing the potion and filling the little leather pouch that the patient could wear around his neck. He had learned of this diagnostic method from a small collection of rituals and prescriptions concerned with potency cures. The single-column cuneiform tablet that contained these texts had originally been written by a Babylonian scholar in the south of Mesopotamia, but his uncle's library held a copy of the text.[3]

The procedure was simple: Kiṣir-Nabû kneaded emmer dough with clay and used the malleable mixture to form two figurines, one of a man and one of a woman. He put the two figurines on top of each other as if having sexual intercourse and placed the arrangement next to the patient's head. Having recited an unintelligible incantation[4] seven times over the figurines, he took them out onto the street and placed them near a pig. The behaviour of the pig would

2 For the library of Kiṣir-Aššur and the family of *āšipu*-experts to whom this library belonged, see St. M. Maul, "Die Tontafelbibliothek aus dem sogenannten 'Haus des Beschwörungspriesters,'" in *Assur-Forschungen. Arbeiten aus der Forschungsstelle "Edition literarischer Keilschrifttexte aus Assur" der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, ed. St. M. Maul and N.P. Heeßel (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 189–228.

3 The story is invented, of course, but the tablet exists and was published as E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 28 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1915–19), no. 70. (ed. R.D. Biggs, *šÀ.zi.ga. Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources 2 (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. August, 1967), 53 with further references). The fragmentary subscript of the tablet (rev. 35, ed. H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 2 (Kevelaer; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 87) states that the copy was based on an original from Babylon.

4 On 'abracadabra' incantations ('*voces magicae*') in Mesopotamian ritual lore, see D. Schwemer, "'Form follows function'? Rhetoric and Poetic Language in First-Millennium Akkadian Incantations," *Welt des Orients* 44 (2014): 166 with further references.

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then reveal to him the cause of the man's impotence: If the pig approached the figurines, the suffering had been caused by the anger of Ištar, the goddess of libido and love. In this case the therapy would certainly include measures to sooth the goddess's wrath. If the pig, however, kept away from the figurines, more sinister forces were at play. The fact that even this impure animal, which was notorious for eating the rubbish in the streets, did not touch the figurines indicated that the impotent man had fallen victim to the performance of abhorrent and illegal rituals that were generally known as *kišpū*.[5]

The respected profession of the *āšipu* Kiṣir-Nabû and the illegal rites branded as *kišpū*, which even a pig found revolting, mark the two furthest opposites of ritual in the societies of second- and first-millennium Mesopotamia. In between those two extremes, a world opens up that is alive with a great variety of ritual practices, some highly respected, others regarded with wariness; some visible in day-to-day life, others seemingly shrouded in secrecy.

2 A World Alive with Rituals and Ceremonies

For the people of ancient Mesopotamia, traditional ceremonies rich with symbolic meaning and performed at specific times or on particular occasions were part of daily experience. Some of these rituals took place, at least in part, in areas of restricted access, such as the interior of a city's temple. Others were more visible and would attract a wider range of participants and observers; thus processions that led through the streets of the city and beyond its borders were a constituent element of the annual cult festivals at the great temples, and numerous smaller open-air shrines invited worshippers at any time.[6] On regular occasions families visited the graves of their ancestors, often situated within the house, in order to care for the deceased relatives.[7] Divination

5 Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte*, no. 70 obv. 1–10, ed. Biggs, *šà.zi.ga*, 46–47 (unpublished duplicate: BM 35394 obv. i 1′–8′). The following sections on the tablet offer various therapies for impotence, including prescriptions against *kišpū*-induced impotence (obv. 11–21, ed. *CMAwR* 1, text 2.5) and a short ritual before Ištar (obv. 45-rev. 9, ed. Biggs, *šà.zi.ga*, 31–32 no. 13).

6 For the temples and their cult, see C. Waerzeggers, "The Pious King: Royal Patronage of Temples," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. K. Radner and E. Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and M.E. Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2015) (both with further literature).

7 Funerary rituals have been discussed by A. Tsukimoto, *Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (kispum) im alten Mesopotamien*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 216 (Kevelaer; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1985), K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel. Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7 (Leiden; New York; Köln: E.J. Brill, 1998), 42–65, B. Mofidi

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experts investigated present conditions and future events, the significance of ominous signs and the fate of their clients; their methods ranged from expensive extispicy to simple flour divination. Some diviners, not least the *bārû*, who specialized in extispicy, were learned scholars, others illiterate soothsayers offering their services in the streets; most of them would employ ritualized symbolic gestures and recitations in their divinatory practices.[8]

The many and various rituals that any Babylonian and Assyrian would have known from an early age were, however, not limited to the spheres of attending to deities, communicating with the divine and looking after the dead. Illness, misfortune, uncertainty and adversity could all prompt the performance of ceremonial rituals or the ritualized fabrication of remedies and apotropaics. A variety of experts could be consulted if illness had struck or a crisis of some other kind indicated the presence of evil forces. Only two of these professions, whose representatives were called *asû* on the one hand, and *āšipu* on the other, were an established part of the urban elite and participated in the written tradition. Therefore the reconstruction of rituals and remedies for healing illnesses and warding off evil in second- and first-millennium Mesopotamia inevitably relies heavily on the professional written lore of *asûtu*, "the art of the *asû*", and *āšipūtu*, "the art of the *āšipu*".[9]

Nasrabadi, *Untersuchungen zu den Bestattungssitten in Mesopotamien in der ersten Hälfte des ersten Jahrtausends v. Chr.*, Baghdader Forschungen 23 (Mainz: von Zabern, 1999), and St. M. Lundström, "Zur Aussagekraft schriftlicher Quellen hinsichtlich der Vorstellungen vom Leben nach dem Tod in Mesopotamien," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 30, (2005): 30–50.

8 For divination practices and the associated rituals, see St. M. Maul, *Die Wahrsagekunst im Alten Orient* (München: C.H. Beck, 2013), with previous literature.

9 For discussions of the professions of the *asû* and *āšipu*, see E.K. Ritter, "Magical-expert (= *āšipu*) and Physician (= *asû*): Notes on Two Complementary Professions in Babylonian Medicine," in *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His Seventy-fifth Birthday, April 21, 1963*, ed. Hans G. Güterbock and Thorkild Jacobsen, Assyriological Studies 16 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), M. Stol, "Diagnosis and Therapy in Babylonian Medicine," *Jaarbericht ex Oriente Lux* 32, (1993): 42–65, R.D. Biggs, "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. J.M. Sasson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995), 1911–24, J.A. Scurlock, "Physician, Exorcist, Conjurer, Magician: A Tale of Two Healing Professionals," in *Mesopotamian Magic. Textual Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*, ed. T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn, Ancient Magic and Divination 1 (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 69–79, D. Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber und Behexung. Studien zum Schadenzauberglauben im alten Mesopotamien* (*Unter Benutzung von Tzvi Abuschs Kritischem Katalog und Sammlungen im Rahmen des Kooperationsprojektes Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), 188–193 and U. Steinert, "Catalogues, Texts and Specialists—Some Thoughts on the Assur Medical Catalogue and Mesopotamian Healing Professions," in *Sources of Evil. Studies in Mesopotamian Exorcistic Lore*, ed. G. Van Buylaere, M. Luukko, D. Schwemer and A. Mertens-Wagschal, Ancient Magic and Divination 15 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2018), 48–132.

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The *asû*, usually translated "physician", was concerned with dressing wounds, rashes and other skin diseases, setting bones, treating coughs and sneezes, curing inflamed eyes, heatstroke and constipation, as well as performing hit-or-miss surgery. Detailed instructions for the production and application of remedies formed part of *asûtu*, as did the wording of the incantations that had to be recited over salves, potions, poultices, phylacteries, enemas or other medications. The remedies of *asûtu* were suited to a wide array of ailments, including conditions that were considered to have no ulterior cause ('hand')[10] as well as afflictions that one attributed to harmful actions of angry deities, demons, malevolent fellow humans or, indeed, of the patient himself.

The performance of complex rituals against all kinds of illness and trouble was the hallmark of the lore of the *āšipu* (also *mašmaššu*), usually translated as "exorcist" in English.[11] These rituals included prayers and incantations, offerings to deities and various symbolic gestures (often involving figurines), as well as the production of remedies, such as salves, potions or phylacteries and amulets. A basic objective of most defensive *āšipūtu* rituals was the purification and release of the patient, whose suffering was conceptualized as a state of being impure and bound. This included the removal of the evil from the patient's body, its dismissal and safe disposal. Defensive rituals against agents of evil—be they demons, ghosts, angry deities, curses, inauspicious portents or malevolent fellow humans attacking the patient with harmful rituals—constitute a major part of the text corpus of *āšipūtu* and make up a large portion of the rituals listed as the sanctioned knowledge of *āšipūtu* in the so-called *Exorcist's Manual*.[12]

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10 For the expression "hand of …" for designating the cause of illnesses, see N.P. Heeßel, *Babylonisch-assyrische Diagnostik*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 43 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), 47–57; for an illness without a 'hand', cf. A.R. George, *Babylonian Divinatory Texts. Chiefly in the Schøyen Collection*, Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 18 (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2013), 88, § 20′.

11 In German the most common translation is "Beschwörer", a literal rendering of the Akkadian word, which is derived from the semantic root **wšp* "adjure" (cf. A. Cavigneaux, "A Scholar's Library in Meturan? With an Edition of the Tablet H 72 (Textes de Tell Haddad VII)," in *Mesopotamian Magic*, 251–273, 260 for a possible original meaning "to spit"). Due to its unhelpful association with the modern stage magician, the English counterpart "conjurer" is mostly avoided.

12 For this text, see M.J. Geller, "Incipits and Rubrics," in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*, ed. A.R. George and I.L. Finkel (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 242–254, C. Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne en contexte: Recherches sur le métier d'exorciste et le concept d'āšipūtu*, State Archives of Assyria Studies 17 (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2006), 62–72, D. Schwemer, "Magic Rituals: Conceptualization and Performance," in *Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. K. Radner and E. Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 421–423, E. Frahm, "The "Exorcist's Manual": Structure, Language, 'Sitz im Leben'," in *Sources of Evil*, 9–47, U. Steinert, "Catalogues, Texts and Specialists," in *Sources of Evil*, 48–132.

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Besides the therapeutic and prophylactic rituals that share an essentially defensive character, *āšipūtu* also comprised liminal rituals, in particular rites for inducting or re-inducting persons and objects to the sacral sphere of the temple cult. Moreover, a range of aggressive rituals could be employed to manipulate other persons or to increase one's own power and attractiveness. In contrast to the defensive and liminal rites, the *Exorcist's Manual* does not mention this type of rituals, but the surviving cuneiform manuscripts prove that scholars transmitted these texts from generation to generation as part of the lore and practice of *āšipūtu* (see below, Section 8).

Just as the *asû* and the *āšipu* were representatives of two different professions, the texts of *asûtu* and *āšipūtu* were considered two distinct branches of knowledge and often transmitted independently in different collections and series. In practice, however, it was probably not rare for a patient to consult both experts at the same time. Moreover, the range of texts found in tablet collections such as that of the *āšipu* Kiṣir-Aššur (see above, Section 1) shows that the expertise of individual scholars was, of course, not restricted to the ideal definition of his professional knowledge.

The *asû* and *āšipu* were not the only healing and ritual experts in the societies of Babylonia and Assyria. On the streets and in their houses people like the *mušlaḫḫu* 'snake charmer', the *mušēlû* (*eṭemmi*) 'necromancer' and the *eššebû* 'owlman' plied their trade; women like the *qadištu* and the *nadītu*, who were associated with temples, had ritual expertise and could be consulted. None of these men and women transmitted their knowledge in writing, and thus their traditions are largely inaccessible to us. Occasionally the doings of ritualists like the *mušlaḫḫu* or the *qadištu* are mentioned in the incantations of *āšipūtu*. There they form part of the pejorative stereotypes associated with the harmful, unsanctioned, illegal ritual practice called *kišpū*, commonly translated as "witchcraft" or "sorcery". Numerous defensive *āšipūtu* rituals are designed to counter or prevent an attack of *kišpū* and heal its harmful effects on the patient. These so-called anti-witchcraft rituals are the most prolific source of information on the cultural constructions of unsanctioned, feared and detested ritual in ancient Mesopotamia.

3 Illegal Ritual: The Terminology

Throughout all periods Mesopotamian law collections include references to illegal ritual activities. The Laws of Urnamma (§ 13; 21st cent. BCE) and the Laws of Ḫammurāpi (§ 2; 18th cent. BCE) impose punishments—the former a high payment, the latter death—for someone who falsely accuses another person of such practices. The Middle Assyrian Laws (§ 47; 11th cent. BCE)

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prescribe the death penalty for a person convicted of having performed illegal rituals, and the succession treaty of the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon contains a similar prohibition (§ 23; 7th cent. BCE).[13]

The Akkadian legal texts employ the word *kišpū* as the technical term for outlawed ritual, a noun with a common Semitic background that refers not only to the activity of performing prohibited rituals, but also to the consequent miasma affecting the victim. The corresponding Sumerian word $uš_{7/11}$ (in the Laws of Urnamma the derivation nam-˹$uš_7$˺?-zu) literally means "spittle", and the image of defilement by being spat on is often found in descriptions of harmful ritual activity, not least in analogy to the casting of spells.

Outside the legal texts, in particular in prayers and incantations, there is a variety of Akkadian words that are synonyms of *kišpū* or designate specific forms of it.[14] The most important synonyms are *ruḫû* (< *ruḫḫû* "to inseminate") and *rusû* (< *russû* "to bind"). The former recalls the image of the harmful spell entering the victim's body like semen the body of a woman, whereas the latter is connected to the concept of illness as a state of being bound. The expression *qāt amēlūti* "'hand' of a human person" refers to the agent of the harmful rituals and contrasts with similar expressions that name a deity or a demon as the ulterior cause of an ailment. The word *upšāšû*, often translated "machinations", is ambiguous: In many contexts, then often accompanied by the attribute *lemnūtu* "evil", it serves as a synonym of *kišpū*. At the same time, however, the beneficial rituals of Asalluḫi, the god of *āšipūtu*, are regularly referred to by the same word. The noun *upšāšû* derives from *epēšu* "to do", which often occurs in the meaning "to perform (rituals)"—indeed the Akkadian word for "ritual" (*nēpešu*) belongs to the same semantic root.

A number of technical terms designate specific methods of *kišpū*. The most important of them are superficially Akkadianized Sumerian expressions that are in this form not attested in Sumerian contexts and therefore best interpreted as learned coinage. They include *zikurudû* (zi-ku_5-ru-da)

13 See Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 118–119 (cf. also M. Lang, "Von der Unordnung der Zauberei und von der Ordnung des Rechts: *ratio legis* und 'Sitz im Leben' eines lange bezeugten Tatbestandes," *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 18 (2012): 37–61; for the Laws of Urnamma, see now M. Civil, "The Law Collection of Ur-Namma," in *Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions and Related Texts in the Schøyen Collection*, ed. A.R. George, Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology 17 (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2011), 221–86). Neo-Babylonian Laws, § 7, will be discussed *infra*, Section 8.

14 For a discussion of the relevant Akkadian and Sumerian terminology, see Schwemer *Abwehrzauber*, 5–21. For a single instance of *kišpū* being used as a non-derogatory term, see D. Schwemer, "*Abwehrzauber und Behexung*—Addenda and Corridenda," *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* 16 (2008); for rare examples of singular *kišpu* instead of the common *plurale tantum*, see *CMAwR* 1, p. 244.

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'cutting-of-the-throat', *kadabbedû* (ka-dab-be$_2$-da) 'seizing-of-the-mouth' and *dibalû* (di-bal-a) 'overturning-of-justice'. The terminology sheds light on some specific aspects associated with harmful ritual: It could potentially cause a victim's death (*zikurudû*), effect speech impairments and the inability to present one's case eloquently before authorities (*kadabbedû*) and prevent the injured person of gaining justice before a judge. Yet another form of *kišpū* was called *zīru* (ḫul-gig) 'hate'. It was considered to make its victim detestable to other people and thus isolate him or her. Incantations that formed part of rituals for fending off *kišpū* occasionally enumerate various forms of evil rituals. There, *zīru* "hate" is often paired with *râmu* (ki-aĝ$_2$-ĝa$_2$) "love", a type of ritual that is well known from the tablet collections of the *āšipu*-experts. This may be taken as a first indication that some of the more specific terms referring to malevolent ritual practices belong to a sphere that is somewhere in between the canon of *āšipūtu* as laid out by the *Exorcist's Manual* and the superordinate concept indicated by *kišpū*, which clearly implied unsanctioned and illegal ritual.

4 Stereotypes of Evil Ritual

The incantations and prayers that *āšipu* and patient recited in the course of the performance of rituals against (various forms of) *kišpū*[15] include extensive descriptions of the evil rites and machinations that fellow humans allegedly carried out against the patient. These descriptive passages, which are suffused with accusatory rhetoric, are the most prolific source of information on the stereotypical images and clichés that Babylonians and Assyrians associated with evil ritual. Detailed diagnostic passages, which can be found in the introductory sections of some of the texts concerned with rituals and remedies against *kišpū*, offer similar accounts of the schemes that were considered to have caused the patient's suffering.

The texts portray the actions performed against the patient as hostile, aggressive, harassing and "evil" or "not good" (*lemnu, lā ṭābu*), i.e., malevolent

15 For editions of anti-witchcraft rituals, see *CMAwR* 1 and 2 (vol. 3 under preparation); *CMAwR* 1 includes an introductory essay on this text group (pp. 1–24). For an edition of Maqlû, the most extensive anti-witchcraft ceremony, see T. Abusch, *The Magical Ceremony Maqlû. A Critical Edition*, Ancient Magic and Divination 10 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2016) supplemented by D. Schwemer, *The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû. The Cuneiform Sources of a Magic Ceremony from Ancient Mesopotamia* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 5–22 which includes a synopsis of the ritual.

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and morally wrong.[16] Two general motifs recur in various forms: (1) The evildoers defile their victim, forcing the target of their machinations into a state of impurity (e.g., *lu"û*). (2) They bind him or her, ensnaring the patient with their bonds and knots (*riksu, kiṣru*). These conventional motifs reflect, of course, the widespread concept of illness as a state of being bound and impure. The association between evil ritual and binding was so pervasive that it is even reflected in the hermeneutics of extispicy: "If the (sheep's) liver is entangled by filaments everywhere, witchcraft (*kišpū*) will appear in the house of the client."[17]

Incantations and diagnoses mention various practices and techniques of evil ritual that may have caused the patient's condition: An affliction with *kišpū* may, for example, be due to contamination. The evildoers transmit *kišpū* like a contagious substance to their victim. They manipulate food, drink, bathwater, ointment and presents by reciting an evil spell over them (or spitting into them), thus turning harmless sources of pleasure into carriers of doom. This topos originates in the uncertainty and apprehensiveness of a guest who is at his host's mercy and not in control of his environment.

At the same time, *kišpū* can also be caught by chance, e.g., by stepping into contaminated bathwater or picking up items that have been in contact with a person affected by *kišpū*. This motif reflects the fact that purification rituals produce impure materials that one could encounter unawares after their disposal. Some anti-witchcraft rituals indeed give instructions for the transfer of the patient's *kišpū* onto items that are then laid out on the street to be picked up by an unsuspecting passerby.[18]

The ritual technique that prayers and incantations most commonly impute to the evildoers is the manipulation of representations of the patient.

16 The following account is largely based on Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 84–105, 108–110; see there for detailed references to relevant source texts. For an earlier comprehensive discussion of the general topic, see M.-L. Thomsen, *Zauberdiagnose und Schwarze Magie in Mesopotamien*, Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications 2 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1987).

17 F. Thureau-Dangin, *Tablettes d'Uruk à l'usage des prêtres du temple d'Anu au temps des Seleucides*, Musée du Louvre. Département des Antiquités Orientales, Textes cuneiformes 6 (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1922), no. 1 obv. 51; cf. U. Koch, *Secrets of Extispicy. The Chapter Multābiltu of the Babylonian Extispicy Series and Niṣirti bārûti Texts mainly from Aššurbanipal's Library*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 326 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2005), 198.

18 See Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 217–222, for the use of a purse with such purpose (edition: *CMAwR* 1, text 8.2); cf. also the disposal of contaminated items outside the city in E. von Weiher, *Uruk. Spätbabylonische Texte aus dem Planquadrat U 18, Part 5*, Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka Endberichte 13 (Mainz: von Zabern, 1998), no. 248 obv. 5–9 (*CMAwR* 3, text 5.5; under preparation).

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Figurines, drawings or other images of the patient serve the perpetrators, thus the stereotype, as objects of degrading and destructive gestures. With evil spells they request that these symbolic actions effect a corresponding affliction in the patient. Phrases like "they took my measurements" (*mindātīya ilqû*) or "they imitated my features" (*bunnannîya umaššilū*) describe the images of the patient as likenesses, but in the context of ancient Mesopotamian iconography, which identifies individuals not by a realistic rendering of their features, but by the use of standard 'signature elements' they were certainly not imagined as portraits, but as representations comparable to statues or paintings of the patient in other contexts.[19] For the symbolic identification of the images, the evildoers gather scraps and bits from their victim: hair, spittle, a shred from his garment's fringe, clay from the wall of his house or dirt touched by his feet.

The maltreatment of the patient's figurines can take different forms: they are bound, disfigured, pierced, gagged, sullied with polluted water. Often it is difficult to distinguish between descriptions of actions that were supposed to have been enacted on the patient's figurines and more general descriptions of the harm that the patient is said to have experienced; cf. the following incantation passage:[20]

> … who made my figurines, imitated my features,
> seized my mouth, made my neck tremble,
> pressed against my chest, bent my spine,
> weakened my potency, seized my libido,
> made me angry with myself, sapped my strength,
> caused my arms to fall limp, bound my legs,
> decreased my ability to see, impaired my hearing,
> [*had illness strike*] my chest, my shoulders, my flesh,
> filled me with fever, stiffness (and) debility, …

The recitation texts evoke a great variety of images illustrating the procedures by which the evildoers accomplished the final destruction of the figurines and thereby enacted a ritual killing of the patient. The most commonly mentioned

19 Some texts actually state this explicitly: "who made figurines according to my figurines" (*ša ṣalmī ana pī ṣalmīya ibnû*, Maqlû I 131; also I 96 ms. DDD); see Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 93–94 with further references. On 'signature elements' see I.J. Winter, Review of A. Spycket, *La statuaire du proche-orient ancien, Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 36 (1984) 102–114; and ead., "'Idols of the King': Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6 (1992) 13–42.

20 Maqlû I 96–102, ed. Abusch, *The Magical Ceremony Maqlû*, 41–42, 289, 403–404; cf. Schwemer, *The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû*, 83.

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techniques are burning on the one hand (*šarāpu, qalû*), and burial on the other (*šunullu, qebēru, temēru*).[21] Sometimes these actions are framed in figurative phrases, such as "they entrusted them (i.e., the figurines) to (the fire-god) Girra", "they laid them in the lap of a corpse" or "they made them cross (the underworld river) Ḫubur". Some of the burial places mentioned emphasize the irreversibility of the destruction; thus figurines are said to have been interred in a tomb, immured in a wall or thrown in a well or river. Others conjure up visions of constant defilement, such as the burial under a launderer's reed mat, in a sewer or the disposal in places that people constantly tread on: thresholds, gateways, crossings, bridges. The violence of the evildoers' attack is stressed in passages stating that the patient's figurines have been fed to animals or crushed in an oilpresser's vat.

A particularly dangerous form of evil ritual was known as *zikurudû* ('cutting-of-the-throat').[22] The relevant passages in the diagnoses and recitations show that the mention of *zikurudû* called to mind a number of specific rites. Thus the evildoers are accused of having drawn the water of the patient's 'cutting-of-the-throat' (*mê zikurudêšu ḫebû*). This expression and other, comparable phrases refer to symbolic funerary offerings that the adversaries of the patient have allegedly performed against him. A Sumerian incantation from the early second millennium describes this rite explicitly:[23]

> She held up water for him to (the sun-god) Utu in the sky,
> she poured the water in the open libation pipe of a tomb.

'Cutting-of-the-throat' was considered to be typically performed at night before an astral deity. A litany-like list of evil rites perpetrated against the patient includes an enumeration of deities addressed in *zikurudû*, naming the moon-god Sîn, Jupiter, Cygnus, Lyra, Leo, Ursa Major, Scorpio, Orion and Centaurus.[24] Entries in the older Diagnostic Handbook show that the calendrical date at which 'cutting-of-the-throat' had been carried out was regarded as significant

21 For the relationship between these two methods of destruction, see also D. Schwemer, "Entrusting the Witches to Ḫumuṭ-tabal: The ušburruda Ritual BM 47806+," *Iraq* 72, (2010): 63–78.

22 For editions of the rituals against *zikurudû*, see *CMAwR* 1, pp. 399–424 (texts 10.1–10.5), and *CMAwR* 2, pp. 356–394 (texts 10.6–10.13).

23 *CMAwR* 2, text 8.16, 1., lines 10–11; the subject "she" is designated as uš$_{(7)}$-zu "witch" in line 2 of the text.

24 Maqlû IV 52–60, ed. Abusch, *The Magical Ceremony Maqlû*, 120, 321–322. See the comments on this passage in T. Abusch and D. Schwemer, "The Chicago *Maqlû* Fragment (A 7876)," *Iraq* 71 (2009): 71–72.

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too.[25] According to a few texts, the symbolic killing of the patient by *zikurudû* is achieved by pouring water as a funerary offering at the time when a 'star' (planet or constellation) sets and thus, according to Mesopotamian cosmology, enters the underworld. An anonymous Neo-Assyrian letter that makes accusations against a family in the city of Guzana and states that "their women bring down the moon from the sky" may well refer to the same concept.[26]

Incantations also mention *našparāt zikurudê*, "messages of 'cutting-of-the-throat'". This expression alludes to the widespread idea that unpropitious portents in the form of contaminated animals or other objects can be sent to the patient and inflict *zikurudû* on him and his household. The carriers of evil that appear in the patient's environment are often called *upīšū* or *upšāšû*, which, in these contexts, are best translated as "sorcerous devices." The following ritual against *zikurudû* gives instructions on how to dispose of a dead mouse that has been identified as such a 'sorcerous device':[27]

> If 'cutting-of-the-throat' using an *arrabu*-mouse [has been performed] against a man, and a slaughtered *arrabu*-mouse has appeared in the man's house, in [*that*] house door (and) bolt are bewitched (*kašip*). You take this *arrabu*-mouse, you place it [before Sîn]. You clothe it in a pure garment, cover it with a linen cloth, [anoint it] with fine ointment. The man against whom 'cutting-of-the-throat' has been performed you have kneel before Sîn; then [you have him say] thus: "My lord, let me not die before my time, [undo] the sorcerous devices (*upīšū*) that have been made against me, untie these knots that have surrounded me!" This you have him say seven times before Sîn, then you have him bow down. You place his offering ration before Sîn during that night. On the fifteenth day let him tell Sîn everything that worries him. Let him pray fervently every day. You take this *arrabu*-mouse and pack it into the hide of a mouse. You pack small pieces of silver, gold, iron, lapis lazuli, steatite (and) (*nir*)*pappardilû*-stone into it. You then pour oil, fine oil, fine ointment, cedar-scented oil, syrup, ghee, milk, wine (and) vinegar into it. You tie up the front (opening), cover it with a linen cloth. You pack (it) into a tomb. You make a funerary offering, you praise (it), you honour (it), you perform its rites (fully) up to the seventh day. Then the 'cutting-of-the-throat'

25 See *CMAwR* 1, text 12.1.

26 M. Luukko and G. Van Buylaere, *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*, State Archives of Assyria 16 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2002), no. 63 rev. 26 (cf. Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 104, 126 with further references).

27 *CMAwR* 1, text 10.3, lines 20′–35′; for a discussion of the text, see Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 222–226.

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> that has been performed against the man will not approach his body as long as he lives.

At the centre of this ritual is the safe disposal of the mouse that has appeared as a harbinger of 'cutting-of-the-throat' in the man's house. The *āšipu* stuffs it, together with purifying substances, in a sack made from the skin of another mouse and then buries this pure mouse container with all pomp and circumstance. The ceremony takes place at night before the moon-god Sîn and stretches over several days, including the night of the full moon. Rituals against 'cutting-of-the-throat' are often performed before the astral deity that, according to the diagnosis, had been invoked by the evildoers. It is therefore not unlikely that the present ritual is directed against 'cutting-of-the-throat' thought to have been performed before Sîn.

Speech acts are part of all ritual practice in ancient Mesopotamia, and the stereotypes associated with evil rites make no exception to this rule: The adversaries of the patient recite incantations in order to activate evil substances or set demons on their victim's trail. The image of the evildoers performing 'cutting-of-the-throat' and other methods of *kišpū* before a deity raises the question of whether and, if so, how gods participate in evil ritual, or, to put it bluntly: Is prayer a potential means of witchcraft?[28] Many texts imply that Babylonians and Assyrians indeed considered this to be the case. The opening prayer of the anti-witchcraft ritual Maqlû describes how the witch (*kaššāptu*) slandered the patient and thereby estranged his personal gods from him:[29]

> Because the witch bewitched me,
> the 'deceitful one' accused me,
> drove away from me my god and my goddess,
> I have become offensive to (any)one who sees me,
> I suffer from sleeplessness night and day.

A stock phrase of prayers and incantations states that the evildoers "have caused god, king, magnate and nobleman to be angry" with the patient, implying that their slander was not only addressed to human, but also to divine authorities. Indeed, many anti-witchcraft rituals are framed as an appeal process—often before Šamaš, the sun-god and god of justice—that seeks to

28 For a discussion of the relationship between evil ritual and the gods in Mesopotamian thought, see Schwemer *Abwehrzauber*, 149–157.

29 Maqlû I 4–8, ed. Abusch *The Magical Ceremony Maqlû*, 26–27, 285; cf. Schwemer, *The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû*, 77 with fn. 165.

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change the patient's fate, confirm his innocence and ensure the conviction of his slanderers. There is, however, another strand of thought that emphasizes the secrecy of the evil rites, and the Sumerian incantation already quoted above explicitly asserts the ungodly nature of the manipulations that caused the contamination of the sufferer's food:[30]

> She cast a spell on the food, without the order of a god,
> without the *instruction* (*and*) knowledge of a god.

There is not a single cuneiform text that would give instructions for the performance of a *kišpū* ritual. The rites outlined above are, above of all, stereotypical constructions of evil ritual as a cause of illness and misfortune. Anti-witchcraft rituals, however, often consist of a symbolic reversal, by which *kišpū* is removed from the patient and sent back to its original perpetrators who then are afflicted and destroyed by the evil that they themselves caused. The individual rites of anti-witchcraft rituals are therefore very similar to the evil rituals that the witches—according to the accusations contained in the incantation texts—have supposedly carried out against the patient. Thus the defensive rituals of *āšipūtu* inform and nurture the imaginations and stereotypes associated with *kišpū*. On occasion this inherent disposition for ambiguity may have given rise to conflicting interpretations of ritual practice, but no such case is clearly documented in the available sources.

5 Agents of Evil, Human and Divine

Incantations describe the perpetrators of evil ritual regularly as people that are unknown to their victim. They are frequently addressed with the phrase "whoever you are", or depicted as persons "whom I do not know". In one incantation the speaker declares: "I do not know your city, I do not know your house, I do not know your name, I do not know your lodgings!" (Maqlû II 208). Within the rhetoric of anti-witchcraft rituals, the professed ignorance of the attackers' identity portrays the patient as an innocent victim who has fallen prey to evil machinations without even being involved in a conflict with his or her aggressors. Many incantations refer to the evildoers in the plural, often as a male and female pair, a stylistic ploy that emphasizes their undetermined identity.

30 *CMAwR* 2, text 8.16, 1., lines 12–13; for a documentation of the variants and a philological commentary, see there with references to previous literature.

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Occasionally the recitations include inventory-like passages that list the various possible adversaries:[31]

> The one who has carried out this evil against me,
> —be it a warlock or a witch, be it *a* [*man or a woman*],
> be it someone young or old, be it someone dead or [alive],
> be it father or brother, be it sister or [*mother*],
> be it a friend, a colleague or [*a companion*],
> be it a gatekeeper or a [*palace*] guard—

Nevertheless, the ritual instructions of anti-witchcraft rituals often advise to inscribe the figurines representing the evildoers with their name. In many cases this 'name' may have consisted of a generic label such as *kaššāptī* "my witch". A few ritual texts, however, provide special directives in case the name of the evildoer is unknown to the patient. These provisions show that it was not uncommon to specify the suspected attacker in the performance of a ritual, even though, at the same time, the parlance of the recitations would assert the virtuous ignorance of the patient. There is even a special ritual that can be performed if the identity of the perpetrators is unknown to the patient.[32] The mere existence of a ritual that is tailored for this specific purpose suggests that it was usually assumed that a victim of *kišpū* would harbour suspicions against a concrete person.

Despite the stress on their unknown identity, the stereotypes of the agents of evil are clearly gendered. The prototypical perpetrator of *kišpū* is a woman, the *kaššāptu*: If the incantations describe an agent of *kišpū* in more detail, they usually present the image of an evil woman. A diagnosis within an anti-witchcraft ritual explicitly states that the harmful ritual had been performed by a woman.[33] The male counterpart of the *kaššāptu*, the *kaššāpu*, remains a bland character, usually only mentioned as the formulaic companion of the *kaššāptu* in the frequent expression "(my) warlock and witch". The primarily male stereotype of a performer of dangerous ritual is not the *kaššāpu*, but the *bēl dabābi* "adversary (in court)", "litigant", often also called *bēl amāti* "litigant" or *bēl lemutti* "adversary", "evildoer". This cliché denotes the male competitor and

31 *CMAwR* 2, text 11.5, lines 10–15. For further references and a discussion of the stereotype of the witch in anti-witchcraft incantations, see Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 69–84.

32 "If witchcraft (*kišpū*) has been performed repeatedly against a man, and he does not know the person who has performed it." (K 9028 rev. 6′ // K 9496 rev. 6′; see Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 118 with fn. 259; cf. also ibid., 201–202).

33 *CMAwR* 2, text 8.29, line 14: "… to effect the release of the sorcery (*ipšu*) that a woman (*sinništu*) has performed against him … ."

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opponent who employs aggressive rituals against his victim. Anti-witchcraft rituals accuse him of having performed *kišpū*, and some of the relevant incantations supply him with a female partner, the *bēlet dabābi*; but, similar to the male *kaššāpu*, the female adversary has no significance beyond the rhetoric of the recitation texts. Both stereotypes, that of the dangerous, ritual-performing woman and that of the plotting male opponent, reflect male anxieties in a patriarchal society. Indeed, the typical victim of *kišpū*, even if one discounts the texts' conventional reference to the patient as "man" (*amēlu*), appears to be male, even though women were also considered potential prey of witches, especially when bearing a child or in childbirth.

The descriptions of the *kaššāptu* in the incantations include a variety of epithets, some of them approximate synonyms (e.g., *ēpištu* "sorceress", *muštēpištu* "enchantress", *rāḫītu* "magician"), others more descriptive (e.g., "murderess", "stalker", "spy") or referring to archetypical foreign enemies of Babylonians: she is a Sutean, Ḫanigalbatean, Elamite, Lullubean, Gutean, or Subarean woman. Also some professions are associated with performers of evil ritual. Among them are temple offices such as that of the *qadištu* and the *nadītu*, women who had some ritual and therapeutic knowledge, whose social environment was traditionally less accessible to men and whose standing in society seems to have deteriorated in the course of the second millennium. Also various ritualists at the lower end of Babylonian society are named in this context (*eššebūtu, mušlaḫḫatu*, etc.), as are some crafts from which women were excluded, such as the female exorcist (*āšiptu*), or which are otherwise not attested for women, such as the female goldsmith (*kuttimmatu*).

In the incantation texts the female agent of evil ritual may take on features that are reminiscent of descriptions of demons. One passage evokes the image of a *kaššāptu* who defiles heaven, strikes the earth and binds the gods. The *kaššāptu* is imagined not only to prowl through the streets of cities, but also to roam across lands and mountains like a powerful demon.[34] Descriptions of the *kaššāptu* who casts her malevolent glance on her victim, studies her prey's features and keeps looking around for other targets suggest that the Evil Eye,

34 Cf., e.g., Maqlû III 47–50, VI 143″–145″, 152″–154″. T. Abusch, "The Demonic Image of the Witch in Standard Babylonian Literature: The Reworking of Popular Conceptions by Learned Exorcists," in *Religion, Science, and Magic in Concert and in Conflict*, ed. J. Neusner, E.S. Frerichs and P.V. McCracken Flesher (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 39–50, describes the 'demonization' of the witch as a historical development that is reflected in the textual history of Maqlû.

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a destructive female demon, originates in the idea of the evil gaze of fellow humans, not least of malicious characters like the *kaššāptu*.[35]

Aside from such amplifications of the stereotype from fellow human to demon, there are also groups of witches, male and female, that are at home in the sphere of the gods, in the heavens and the netherworld. An Akkadian incantation describes the evil activities of seven heavenly witches (*kaššāpātu*):[36]

> The witches, the 'deceitful ones',
> have come down to the land to me.
> They call out 'illuru', they begin to sing.
> They carry water of the Ocean, the wide sea,
> they keep spilling (it) onto the streets.
> They bind the young men, they murder the girls,
> they spread dead silence everywhere.

The goddess Kanisurra, a young unmarried girl in the circle of Ištar, was known as the "lady of the witches" (*bēlet kaššāpāti*), an epithet that one text also assigns to Ištar herself. Little is known about Kanisurra, but as a daughter of Nanaya she was considered a goddess of sexual love, and her name indicates that she was associated with the netherworld (as is the case with aspects of Ištar). The imagery of singing witch-girls that descend from heaven and a young, enchanting and, at the same time, dangerous goddess as lady of the witches illustrates that the stereotype of the *kaššāptu* has little in common with that of the old hag in European folklore.

6 Afflicted by *Kišpū*: Illness, Misfortune, Distress

Some incantations describe the suffering that has been inflicted on the patient by the performance of an evil ritual or by another form of contamination with *kišpū*. The symptoms mentioned in these accounts relate to physical as well as mental ailments and may also include social problems of the patient and misfortunes more generally.[37] More detailed information on the kind of suffering that Babylonian and Assyrian experts considered to have been caused by *kišpū*

35 See Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 67–68; for the following, see ibid., 110–118 (partly revised in Schwemer, *The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû*, 16).

36 *CMAwR* 1, text 7.8, 1., line 13′–18′.

37 See T. Abusch, "Witchcraft, Impotence, and Indigestion," in *Disease in Babylonia*, ed. M.J. Geller and I.L. Finkel, Cuneiform Monographs 36 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2007), 146–159 and Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 105–108, 165–193 (with further literature).

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are provided by the symptom descriptions and diagnoses that form the introduction of many anti-witchcraft rituals. According to these texts, *kišpū* did not serve as the etiological diagnosis of one specific syndrome, but was associated with a range of complex ailments. In *CMAwR* 1, text 8.1, line 6, the perplexity of the observed disease pattern ("if you are not able to identify the nature of his illness") is adduced as a tell-tale sign of a *kišpū*-induced illness. There are, however, a number of signal symptoms that an *āšipu* would read as potential pointers of an affliction by *kišpū*. These include headache and vertigo; shooting pains in various limbs; paralysis and numbness; stomachaches and nausea; despondency, anxiety and states of confusion; excessive salivation, phlegm and bleeding gums; low libido and impotence; social isolation and failure. None of these symptoms occur exclusively with *kišpū* diagnoses, and even though the syndromes are described in the form of standardized texts and do not represent case histories of specific persons, there is a great variety of symptom descriptions with *kišpū* diagnosis. One of the more extensive examples reads as follows:[38]

> If a man's head [keeps causing him a nagging pain], his tongue causes him a stinging pain, he has [vertigo], his ears buzz, his neck [...], his neck muscles keep causing him a nagging pain, his chest and [his back] keep causing him a nagging pain, his upper thighs keep twisting out of place, his arms are numb, his fingers (and) his hands become more and more immobilized, his intestines are continually bloated, his bowels are convulsed, his legs (and) his feet cause him [a gnawing] pain, his flesh is numb, he is too weak to rise, [to] stand and to talk, he is now flushed, now pale, he keeps talking to himself, his heart ponders foolishness, his mind is getting more and more confused, he keeps forgetting 'the speech of his mouth', he develops fever, stiffness, *li'bu*-disease and depression, his dreams are confused (and) numerous, he sees dead people repeatedly, he keeps speaking to dead people, his heart is depressed, he is short-tempered, the dreams he sees he cannot remember, he retches and vomits, he is constantly frightened (and restless) on his sickbed, he keeps sweating heavily, he gets cold tremors repeatedly, he rises, (but then) crouches (down immediately), [his ... is] hurting him, he becomes more and more depressed, he experiences [quarrel at home] (and) squabble in the street, he suffers from shortness of breath, he says "woe" (and) cries "alas", he has no desire [to eat and] drink, he has no desire to go to a woman, his 'heart' does not arouse him towards a woman, he babbles, he is rigid, he

38 *CMAwR* 1, text 8.6, 1., lines 1–23.

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> wearies himself, he keeps …, he says "Have mercy on me!", his 'mouth' is constantly troubled, (then) that man has been given (bewitched) bread to eat, has been given (bewitched) beer to drink, has been anointed with (bewitched) oil. Figurines representing him have been buried with a dead person; they have been handed over to a persecuting ghost.

The various symptom descriptions can be subdivided into several groups. There are complex syndromes like the one quoted here. They usually include paralysis and numbness, depression and anxiety, as well as anomalous salivating among the symptoms; a few shorter symptom descriptions that share these basic symptoms are also covered by this group. Furthermore, there are symptom descriptions that deal mainly with anomalous liquids coming from the mouth (phlegm, saliva, blood), some of them clearly diseases of the respiratory systems. A further group is concerned with stomachaches, especially of the upper abdomen. Generally, symptoms of the upper part of the torso and head (upper abdomen, lungs, mouth) seem often to be associated with *kišpū*, probably because it can be ingested with food and drink. Another group is formed by texts that ascribe impotence to the performance of evil rituals by a *kaššāptu*. It has been claimed that *kišpū* was always considered as the cause of impotence, but this seems to be an overgeneralization. Then, there are a number of texts that focus on the mental and social condition of the patient. It is not due to chance that the last-named group typically either indicates a sorcerous attack by the *bēl dabābi* as the cause of the ailment or connects the affliction with *kišpū* explicitly with the anger of the patient's personal gods. Both types combine the *kišpū* diagnosis with motifs that pertain to the experience of social pressure and isolation. Here an example for the introductory section of a ritual against an adversary:[39]

> If a man (has acquired an adversary): so that his adversary (*bēl lemutti*) *not approach* him, and so that he prevail over him, so that god, king, magnate and nobleman listen to the word he speaks, so that his talking be sweet to commander and attendant as well as to (the guard of) the gate of the palace, and so that he find compassion before god, king, magnate and nobleman (and before) courtier and attendant like (before) the father who begot [him and the] mother who bore him, so that the one who sees him be delighted in his presence, so that he always visit his palace safely, so that he pursue his [heart's] wishes (with success) (and) obtain what he

39 *CMAwR* 1, text 7.6.6, lines 1–13, with restorations according to the unpublished duplicate BM 82994 (to be edited in *CMAwR* 3).

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> desires, [so] that his bread offerings be loved, and so that his litigant (*bēl amāti*) be made an object of hate, so that he ask and achieve (and) find consent whenever [he] speaks, so that his purity be achieved, so that his sins be wiped out, so that his dreams be made favourable.

Finally, a number of texts are concerned with the danger that an attack by *kišpū* posed to pregnant women, women in childbirth and infants. Otherwise there are no *kišpū*-induced sufferings that one considered to apply specifically to women.

7 Persecution of Purported Evil Ritualists

In contrast to early modern Europe, records directly connected with witch trials—case files, reports on lawsuits, or relevant theological and juridical treatises—are attested rarely or not at all in ancient Mesopotamia. Law collections from various periods state (or imply) the illegality of the practice of *kišpū* and impose the capital punishment on perpetrators (see above, Section 3). Documented cases of the application of these legal principles appear, however, not frequently in the written record. In view of the overall size, density and nature of the extant body of cuneiform texts, this situation cannot be adequately explained by the assumption of an accidental dearth of sources. It rather indicates that the tensions and suspicions, aggression and fear articulated and invigorated by cultural constructions of evil ritual were usually managed and constrained at a ritual level without ever entering the sphere of legal prosecution.

The few cases of a persecution of purported evil ritualists that can be named provide a welcome supplement to the stereotypes of evil ritual apparent from the ritual texts.[40] In a small town in early second-millennium Babylonia a property dispute between father and son escalates into public accusations of *kišpū* against the daughter-in-law and her mother. The women are led before the judges, but the outcome of the trial is unknown. In the correspondence of the royal court at 18th-century Mari several cases of women accused of having performed *kišpū* are attested. Among them is the princess Šīmatum who stands accused of having poisoned her father with *šammī ša kišpī* "herbs of witchcraft." Part of the background of this accusation is a conflict between the sisters Šīmatum and Kirûm, both married to Ḫaya-sūmu of Ilān-ṣūrā, Kirûm as

40 For an overview of the attested cases of witchcraft accusations outside the ritual sphere, see Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 118–127 with further references to the individual texts.

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the second wife after the marriage with Šīmatum had not resulted in progeny. At the court of Zalmaqqum a lady-in-waiting of the local queen is reported to have died while undergoing a river ordeal. The test was conducted with regard to her statement in legal proceedings against her queen who is prosecuted for adultery and having performed *kišpū* against her husband.[41]

Also the letters to Neo-Assyrian kings mention action taken against persons that are accused of having performed evil rituals. An anonymous letter to Esarhaddon (7th cent. BCE) containing incriminations against an influential family in the city of Guzana reports that "their women bring down the moon from the sky", certainly a reference to unsanctioned ritual practices (see above, Section 4). Kudurru, a 7th-century Babylonian scholar, writes to the Assyrian king with regard to an eclipse in the month Tammuz. He mentions in passing that he has dispatched "numerous witches" to the king who is asked to examine their cases.[42] These reports on people whose practice of evil ritual may pose a danger to the king fits well with the image of the ruler presented in the royal purification ritual Bīt rimki. The king, not least because of his own transgressions, is an unpopular person, slandered by his subjects and surrounded by malevolent competitors, practitioners of evil ritual and enemies.[43]

All concrete accusations of *kišpū* that are documented in the written record outside ritual texts are directed against women. This is, of course, not due to chance, but a reflection of the fact that the stereotype of the practitioner of *kišpū*, as amply described in the incantation texts, is primarily that of a malevolent woman. The apodoses of some omens indeed indicate that the notion

41 Further to the references given in Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 121–122, cf. the English translations of the relevant letters in W. Heimpel., *Letters to the King of Mari. A New Translation, with Historical Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 12 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003).

42 S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, State Archives of Assyria 10 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993), no. 371 rev. 2–5: *kaššāpāta mādāta ana šarri bēlīya altappar šarru lubâ* "I have repeatedly sent many witches to the king, my lord; may the king examine." Jean, *La magie*, 95 argues that the *kaššāptu*-women were sent to the king so that they serve him as practitioners of aggressive rituals against his enemies. This is difficult to reconcile with the pejorative and incriminatory usage of the word *kaššāptu*; also the request for examining the women would be surprising in that context.

43 Bīt rimki, a ritual that was performed in particular when an eclipse indicated peril for the person of the king, is directed mainly against *kišpū* on the one hand, and *māmītu* on the other. In *āšipūtu*-texts one can often observe a complementary relationship between *māmītu*, the curse (occasionally personified as a female demon) as a consequence of one's own transgressions, and *kišpū*, evil rituals performed by others against oneself (Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 66). For an overview of Bīt rimki, see I. Hrůša, *Ancient Mesopotamian Religion. A Descriptive Introduction* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2015), 140–152.

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that a wife may have performed *kišpū* against her own husband was not at all uncommon.[44]

The attested accusations against alleged witches arose in well-circumscribed, small-scale social contexts against the backdrop of escalating conflicts between specific individuals. An exception from this rule is the presentation of "numerous witches" before the Assyrian king, but it seems that even the king, despite his many enemies, was usually protected from practitioners of evil ritual by the performance of counter-rituals rather than a sweeping legal persecution of alleged *kaššāptu*-women.

8 Ambiguity, Change and Continuity

Despite the high regard in which this domain of ritual expertise was generally held, the production and perception of ambiguity is not extraneous to *āšipūtu*. The proceedings of rituals concerned with *kišpū*-induced suffering regularly include symbolic gestures that reflect the malevolent practices assumed to have been performed against the patient. Due to their basic objective of returning the affliction with *kišpū* to the evildoers, counter-rituals of this defensive type may well have been open to different interpretations or may, at least, have provoked ambivalent feelings (see above, Section 4). Bystanders knew that some of the rituals of the *āšipu* were not without risks, especially those that summoned ghosts up from the netherworld, be it for necromantic purposes or as helpers who would carry evil and impurity down to the 'Land of No Return' (i.e., the netherworld).[45] Many purification rituals produced contaminated ritual waste, some transferred the patient's impurity onto other people's property. The Neo-Babylonian laws (§ 7) impose a high penalty on women who damage a man's possessions by the performance of purification rituals (and death by execution if caught performing rituals near the house). This regulation corresponds to rites found in a collection of rituals for women

44 Cf. Multābiltu II 4 (ed. Koch, *Secrets of Extispicy*, 108); Sakikku I 23 (ed. A.R. George, "Babylonian Texts from the Folios of Sidney Smith, Part Two: Prognostic and Diagnostic Omens," *Revue d'Assyriologie* 85 (1991): 142).

45 For necromantic rituals, see J. Tropper, *Nekromantie. Totenbefragung im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 223 (Kevelaer; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 83–109; for the evocation of ghosts within defensive *āšipūtu* rituals, see D. Schwemer, "Evil Helpers: Instrumentalizing Agents of Evil in Anti-witchcraft Rituals," in *Sources of Evil*, 173–191. Rituals concerned with ghost-induced ailments have been comprehensively treated by J. Scurlock, "Sorcery in the Stars. STT 300, BRM 4.19–20 and the Mandaic Book of the Zodiac," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 51 (2006): 125–146.

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suffering from stillbirths, known to us through a copy by the *āšipu* Anu-ikṣur (Uruk, Achaemenid period). There, the pregnant woman transfers her *kišpū*-induced impurity not only on various foodstuffs, but also on a potter's kiln, a date palm and a pregnant donkey—it seems unlikely that their owners greeted the *āšipu* and the woman with much enthusiasm.[46]

An ambiguity that goes beyond the potentially equivocal nature of counter-spells and dangerous rituals transpires from lists of different methods of evil ritual that sometimes form part of incantations and prayers recited in the course of ceremonies against *kišpū*. Next to terms designating types of evil ritual like *zikurudû* (zi-ku$_5$-ru-da) 'cutting-of-the-throat', *kadabbedû* (ka-dab-be$_2$-da) 'seizing-of-the-mouth' and *dibalû* (di-bal-a) 'overturning-of-justice' (see above, Section 3), these lists may also include references to rituals that are well attested in the written tradition of *āšipūtu* and therefore not generally considered a form of illegal *kišpū*. This includes rituals against one's adversary's anger (šur$_2$-ḫuĝ-ĝa$_2$), rituals for gaining the favour of authorities and overcoming one's competitors (e$_2$-gal-ku$_4$-ra) as well as rituals for making another person fall in love (*râmu*, ki-aĝ$_2$-ĝa$_2$), the latter often side by side with 'hate' rituals (*zīru*, ḫul-gig).[47] Clearly there were types of ritual that formed part of *āšipūtu*, but were regarded, at the same time, as potential forms of evil *kišpū*. These types of rituals, none of which is included in the list of sanctioned *āšipūtu* knowledge of the *Exorcist's Manual*, share an aggressive focus; their purpose is to exert influence on other people. Even a short prescription for

46 See for § 7 of the Neo-Babylonian laws Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 119 (cf. also Lang, "Unordnung der Zauberei"). The rituals were first edited by von Weiher, *Uruk. Spätbabylonische Texte*, no. 248; for an English translation, cf. J. Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, Writings from the Ancient World 36 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 684–691 (a new edition will be provided in *CMAwR* 3, text 5.5). Their relevance for the interpretation of the passage in the Neo-Babylonian laws was recognized by Greta Van Buylaere in the course of our work on *CMAwR* 3. She is preparing a study of the texts and their wider context.

47 See Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 67, 127–131, 158–163. Henry Stadhouders is preparing an edition of the e$_2$-gal-ku$_4$-ra rituals and related texts (cf. H. Stadhouders, "A Time to Rejoice: The Egalkura Rituals and the Mirth of Iyyar," in *Time and History in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the 56th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Barcelona 26–30 July 2010*, ed. L. Feliu, J. Llop, A. Millet Albà, and J. Sanmartín (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013); the corpus is now significantly larger than indicated in Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 128. A comprehensive study of aggressive *āšipūtu* rituals has now been undertaken by Avigail Mertens-Wagschal (see provisionally Mertens-Wagschal, "The Lion, the Witch and the Wolf: Aggressive Magic and Witchcraft in the Old Babylonian Period," in *Sources of Evil*, 158–170).

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'seizing-of-the-mouth', usually a form of evil ritual that is to be averted from the patient, is once attested within a Late Babylonian collection of *āšipūtu* texts:[48]

> So that a man's adversary acquires 'seizing-of-the-mouth' and he triumph over him in his lawsuit: the head of an eagle, the feather of an eagle, lion hair in (a) leather (pouch).

In a cluster of behavioural omens within the series Šumma ālu, the performance of various rituals is enumerated in subsequent protases. The list begins with various forms of love rituals (ki-aĝ$_2$-ĝa$_2$, munus-gi-na), continues with rituals against adversaries in court (e$_2$-gal-ku$_4$-ra, ^{d}id$_2$-gur-ra, šu-du$_8$-a) and then adds three types of ritual that are usually incriminated as *kišpu*: ḫul-gig, dibal-a and zi-ku$_5$-ru-da.[49] Even though omen protases do not necessarily reflect real life, the sequence of entries in this passage confirms that the transition between aggressive rituals of *āšipūtu* and illegal *kišpū* was more fluid than anti-witchcraft rituals or legal texts might suggest.

Besides rituals against adversaries and for gaining the favour of authorities or the affection of a desired person, the *āšipu* had a whole range of aggressive rituals at his disposal: for forcing back runaway slaves, ensuring the obedience of servants, attracting patrons to a tavern and guaranteeing the success of a business trip; other rituals could be performed to render a person unpopular, to remove someone from the king's favour, or to upstage a female rival.

Many rituals of this type are named in the so-called *Exorcist's Almanac*, a small group of cuneiform texts that are concerned with favourable dates for the performance of *āšipūtu* rituals and therapies.[50] The earliest source of the *Exorcist's Almanac* dates to the 7th cent. BCE, but it continues to be transmitted in the Hellenistic period, then with dates provided in a zodiacal rather than a calendrical format. Among the more than a hundred rituals listed in the text 46 have a defensive, cathartic or therapeutic character; 12 are rituals for gaining attractiveness and success and thus prevailing in society; 28 ritual types represent aggressive rituals with the goal of exerting power over other people; finally, there are also eleven entries that name methods of ritual that

48 *CMAwR* 2, text 3.4, 3., lines 5–6.

49 Sm 1379 r. col. 5′–12′ (Schwemer, *Abwehrzauber*, 159–160; unpublished duplicate: BM 38441+).

50 The text itself has last been edited by Geller, "Incipits and Rubrics," 27–58; for other recent treatments, see Scurlock, "Sorcery in the Stars," and D. Schwemer, "Beyond Ereškigal? Mesopotamian Magic Traditions in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*," in *Cultural Plurality in Ancient Magical Texts and Practices*, Oriental Religions in Antiquity, ed. L.M. Bortolani, W. Furley, S. Nagel, and J.F. Quack (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

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are usually incriminated as forms of *kišpū* (*dibalû, zīru, zikurudû, kadabbedû*). Whether the latter refer to anti-witchcraft rituals or indeed to favourable dates for the performance of these harmful rituals themselves is a moot point, but one could certainly use these terms without further specification with reference to defensive rituals, as in the following letter to the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon (7th cent. BCE):[51]

> … [Concerning … about] whom the king, my lord, wrote to me [via] Šarrat-samma-[ilāʾī]—in performing the rituals of (i.e., against) the *zikurudû*-rites for him we once again invoked the name and performed it. We are performing the treatment and the rituals constantly and without fail … .

The use of the zodiac for providing recommended dates for the performance of rituals is an Achaemenid-period innovation in the development of the *Exorcist's Almanac*. Astral phenomena had always played their part in *āšipūtu* ritual lore, but references to planets, stars and constellations become more prominent in the second half of the first millennium.[52] This is certainly not the only change that occurred in the practice of *āšipūtu* during the Persian and Hellenistic periods. The inclusion of many aggressive rituals (and, perhaps, even forms of ritual traditionally considered illegitimate) in the *Exorcist's Almanac* has been adduced as an indication of Graeco-Egyptian influence on Assyrian and Babylonian ritual practice in the first millennium.[53] Occasional Aramaic loanwords certainly show that first-millennium exorcists still produced new texts, such as a curious ritual against a male adversary that employs an incantation against a female witch, or an incantation that describes the terrible effects of ingesting the *rapādu*-plant.[54] Aggressive rituals against competitors and for strengthening one's own attractiveness were certainly no less popular in the cities of Achaemenid and Hellenistic Babylonia than they had been in previous centuries. At present it is, however, difficult to judge whether

51 Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, no. 300 obv. 1′–rev. 4.

52 See E. Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 85, no. 4 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995) for a comprehensive study of 'astral magic' in Mesopotamia. For a group of Late Babylonian astral rituals for gaining success, see D. Schwemer, "Secret Knowledge of Lu-Nanna, the Sage of Ur: Six Astral Rituals for Gaining Power and Success (BM 38599)", in *Saeculum: Gedenkschrift für Heinrich Otten anlässlich seines 100. Geburtstags*, ed. A. Müller-Karpe, E. Rieken, and W. Sommerfeld, Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 58 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 211–228.

53 See Scurlock, "Sorcery in the Stars," but differently Schwemer, "Beyond Ereškigal?".

54 See *CMAwR* 1, text 8.12, and *CMAwR* 2, text 7.24.

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rituals of this type became more widespread and common in the later periods, whether their general perception underwent changes and how the presence of Aramaean, Greek and, possibly, Egyptian ritual traditions affected the time-honoured tradition of Babylonian *āšipūtu*. Future research will certainly furnish us with new insights on these matters, but will always be hampered by the fact that texts written on more perishable materials than clay, such as Aramaic magical texts written on parchment, are irretrievably lost.

9 Relevance and Reservations

For all we know, the conviction that illness and misfortune may have been caused by malevolent fellow humans performing harmful rituals was never questioned in ancient Mesopotamia, nor do we find in the cuneiform written record a methodical rejection of the rationality and efficacy of ritual practice, be it defensive or aggressive rites. Witches formed part of the Babylonian and Assyrian world, just as ghosts, demons and deities. At the same time, it was easy to be oblivious of these less tangible inhabitants of the world, not least in times of prosperity and happiness. There is no indication in the sources that the possibility of having fallen victim to perpetrators of evil ritual was a constant concern for people in any period or community in ancient Mesopotamia. In situations of crisis, however, the latent narrative of the evil witch became relevant: If a family member was unexpectedly struck by serious illness, if misfortune and lack of success caused ever-increasing worries and social exclusion, if pregnancies kept on ending in miscarriage, if a judge decided in favour of one's hostile and scheming litigant, then the idea of enemies using unsanctioned ritual, which may have seemed extraordinary under different circumstances, presented a plausible cause of one's situation, and *āšipūtu* offered remedies and rituals that promised help and a better fortune.

Things were slightly different with the person of the king whose well-being was a state affair. Surrounded by the hothouse atmosphere of the royal court, he was considered a target of malevolent ritual activities of enemies and competitors. He also had the means to assemble a group of learned exorcists, physicians, diviners and astronomers who first and foremost served the royal family. Their professional rivalry and the pressures of royal service would ensure that there never was a shortage of rituals to be performed, even if illness and misfortune had not yet befallen the king and his kin.

Of course, *āšipūtu* could not guarantee success. Exorcists regarded certain syndromes or certain stages of a disease as beyond their power. This emerges not only from notes to this effect in the diagnostic and therapeutic texts,

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but also from the correspondence of Neo-Assyrian exorcists with their royal employers. In the following letter Adad-šumu-uṣur, *āšipu* of Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal, prepares his master for the worst:[55]

> … Concerning the two (patients) in the new palace and concerning Sîn-per'u-ukīn about whom the king, my lord, wrote to me: "Go and see them"—now, the king knows that a eunuch took me to the house of Danî, and I performed a ritual for the benefit of his son. His affliction is severe, he is very ill.

In another letter the same Adad-šumu-uṣur has to admit defeat and tells the king that there are illnesses that the art of *āšipūtu* cannot overcome:[56]

> … As to what the king, my lord, wrote to me: "I am feeling very sad; how did we act that I have become so depressed for this little one of mine?"—had it been curable, you would have given away half of your kingdom to have it cured! But what can we do? O king, my lord, it is something that cannot be done.

Occasional failure did not discredit the discipline of *āšipūtu*. There were incurable illnesses, erroneous diagnoses, alternative treatment strategies. And even if the symptoms of an ailment remained or worsened, the interpretation of the illness by the patient and his environment would often have changed. The condition that had indicated an attack of evildoers employing malicious rites and spells was transformed by the performance of the counter-ritual into a normal illness, into a situation one could cope with. Where the modern bystander would observe the foreseeable failure of a superstitious endeavour, to the Mesopotamian eyes the removal of the evil had restored the world's equilibrium.

Occasionally reservations against the effectiveness of *āšipūtu* and its ability to right the wrong that had been done to the patient become apparent in wisdom texts reflecting on suffering and divine justice. The sufferer of the Babylonian Theodicy contends that the aggressive and powerful gather all the riches in a dog-eat-dog world where any hope on divine intervention

55 Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, no. 222 obv. 6–16.
56 Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, no. 187 obv. 6–15.

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in favour of the suffering victim is futile. The sufferer of Ludlul bēl nēmeqi describes the impotence of *āšipūtu*:[57]

> I spend the night in my dung like an ox,
> I wallow in my excrements like a sheep.
> The incantation expert (*mašmaššu*) has been frightened by my symptoms,
> and the diviner (*bārû*) has confused my omens.
> The exorcist (*āšipu*) has not diagnosed the nature of my illness,
> nor has the diviner established the term of my disease.

A sceptical view of *āšipūtu* can also be gleaned from the so-called *aluzinnu*-text, an Akkadian literary parody stylized as a dialogue between a jester and his interlocutor that makes fun of various professionals, among them an exorcist who expels a demon by setting up a stuffed mule as a scapegoat and burning the house down in the process of the demon's expulsion.[58] It is difficult to imagine that an audience enjoying this joke was greatly worried by potential attacks of *kišpū* or other evils at the time, but an unexpected twist of fate would transform attitudes, activate dormant narratives of evil ritual and turn the ridiculed *āšipu* into an indispensable expert in the defence against the sources of evil and in the advantageous use of ritual power.

Suggested Readings

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57 Ludlul bēl nēmeqi II 106–111, ed. W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Eisenbrauns, 1960), 44–45; cf. also T. Oshima, *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers. Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi and the Babylonian Theodicy*, Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 14 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 92–93.

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CHAPTER 5

Iran

Albert de Jong

Although ancient Iran gave the world the word "magic,"[1] Iranian materials do not figure largely in recent (or, indeed, ancient) discussions of "magic" as a concept. This is not, as we shall see, because Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Iran, did not conceive of various kinds of ritual and ritual specialists that were opposed to officially sanctioned religious life. On the contrary, many texts appear to be obsessed with these forms of ritual and the persons who performed them. The main problem is that the treatment of these subjects in the texts is wholly dominated by the process of the construction of what it means to be a good Zoroastrian. Those who do not fit this category are therefore referred to in terms that are so harshly negative and extravagant, that the only reasonable conclusion is that they did not, in fact, exist. They were invented as mirror images of desirable behaviour. Many of them, furthermore, cut through the otherwise fairly strict distinction between humans and supernatural beings, so that for several texts it is unclear whether we are dealing with humans or with demons—a lack of clarity that the authorities behind the texts would no doubt have welcomed.

This situation can be explained in various ways, and some of the limitations of the discussion that will follow must be spelled out first. Although Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest living religions of the world, its history is only very imperfectly known. There are, basically, two clusters of texts from which the normative tradition can be reconstructed, which can be located at the beginning and at the end of the 'classical' period of the religion. The early texts, known as the Avesta, were transmitted in a language that is only known from these ritual texts (and is therefore known as Avestan), an Old East Iranian language that has no living descendants and cannot, therefore, be placed in an exact geographical environment. It cannot be anchored in historical circumstances that are otherwise known, either. Although the texts contain many names, of rulers and heroes of the faith, none of these is known from any source that is not part of the Zoroastrian tradition. There are, it is true,

1 See, for example, J.N. Bremmer, "The Birth of the term 'Magic'," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic. From Late Antiquity to the Modern Period*, ed. J.N. Bremmer and J.R. Veenstra (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 1–11.

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several geographical names that do refer to known localities and these show that the "world" of the Avestan people (the community in which these texts took shape) was somewhere in Eastern Iran and Central Asia (Sogdia, Bactria, Khwarezmia). All other evidence that can be extracted from these texts, is wholly internal.[2]

At a certain moment in history, however, these texts (and, it is to be assumed, the religion which they represented) moved out of their original setting and spread over a number of different Iranian peoples. This process is often interpreted as one of "conversion," with the Iranian peoples accepting, one after the other, the "message" of Zarathushtra, the religion's founder.[3] While most of this is wholly speculative—something that will be discussed more fully below—there is one solid fact that supports at the very least the notion of a "spread" of this particular religion. This is the survival of the Avesta itself. Iranian societies in antiquity were non-literate at first, and learnt the art of writing from those Near Eastern peoples among whom they settled and whom they eventually conquered: the Elamites, Babylonians and Assyrians. The Achaemenid king Darius I (r. 522–486 BCE) was the first Iranian to have an inscription made for him in his own language, in a specially designed, alphabetic, cuneiform script. This script is only known from monumental rock-cut inscriptions and smaller inscriptions on metal, stone, and seals. For administrative purposes, the Persians followed a double system: they relied on local administrative practices in those provinces which had a functioning bureaucracy (Elam, Mesopotamia, Egypt), and supplemented it with the empire-wide use of Aramaic (for which they hired Aramaean scribes initially) as a chancellery language. Since the Achaemenid Empire itself covered most of the ancient world, the use of Aramaic spread far and wide and led to the development of most known writing systems of Asia. There was, thus, ample opportunity for Iranians to employ writing also to record their religious and literary traditions, but this they never did. It is generally believed that this was the result of a conscious *choice*, which was conditioned by two, mutually reinforcing, conceptions. The first of these was that writing was a craft that could best be left to paid practitioners (initially foreigners), whose remit did not automatically extend to the domains of two other, socially crucial, classes of practitioners: the priests, responsible for the transmission of religious literature, and the

2 P.O. Skjaervø, "The Avesta as Source for the Early History of the Iranians," in *The Indo-Aryans of South Asia: Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity*, ed. G. Erdosy (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 155–176.

3 The classic statement is M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism I: The Early Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

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gosans or minstrels, responsible for poetry, epic, history and entertainment. The second, more important, one was the notion (which the Iranians shared with the Indians) that an oral tradition was more to be trusted than the use of writing for the preservation of a body of texts that needed to be handed down unchanged. The best-known narrative formulation of this conviction is the story that writing was invented by the demons, the only useful accomplishment that was ever given a demonic origin.[4]

This tradition, of not writing down religious and literary texts, was broken in the early Sasanian period by the Manichaeans, who used their possession of a *written* corpus of sacred literature as one of the main polemical instruments against the Zoroastrians, and then—in the sixth century CE—finally by the Sasanians themselves, who had a script devised that could cover all nuances of pronunciation and was, thus, believed to be capable of "fixing" the text of the Avesta. All of this, it needs to be stressed again, took place in a society that had ample experience with writing for other purposes. The texts of the Avesta thus survived, from their nebulous origins in the late second millennium or early first millennium BCE to the sixth century CE through an oral transmission. That this transmission was reliable is shown especially by the fact that the Avestan texts have been preserved in two different dialects, of which one is markedly more archaic than the other.

The second cluster of textual evidence for Zoroastrianism comes from the early Islamic period and is written in Middle Persian (also known as Pahlavi). These texts are known collectively as the "ninth-century books," a somewhat arbitrary label that hides the fact that among these texts, some are considerably earlier and many later than the ninth century CE. None, however, is demonstrably earlier than the late Sasanian period (the sixth century), although these texts often include traditions that are thought to go back to a much earlier stage of the development of the religion. These Middle Persian books are, almost without exception, priestly texts and they focus especially on matters of ritual, on legal issues and on theological ideas. Many of them claim to be based on the *Zand*, the translation with exegesis and commentary of the Avestan texts. The primary context of this large body of literature are the Iranian communities of Zoroastrians after the Arab conquests, that is, in a period when Zoroastrianism had lost all secular power and when the communities themselves were dwindling. The chief purpose of these texts is,

4 A. de Jong, "The Culture of Writing and the Use of the Avesta in Sasanian Iran," in *Zarathushtra entre l'Inde et l'Iran. Etudes indo-iraniennes et indo-européennes offertes à Jean Kellens à l'occasion de son 65e anniversaire*, ed. E. Pirart & X. Tremblay (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2009), 27–41 (with references).

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therefore, strictly functional: to save as much of the traditions of the religion as possible. In that goal they focused particularly on knowledge that was "useful" to those who were to use the texts: the priests and the lay Zoroastrians who had to learn how to practise their religion in a society where they were becoming a minority and hence unable to enforce their notions of socially desirable forms of ritual practice. The "enemies" of these texts are chiefly foreigners or apostates (called *an-ēr*, "non-Iranian," collectively). As for the "old" enemies of the Avestan texts—those who worship the *daevas*—they are described in the tradition of Avestan imagery as people who roast corpses for culinary delights and cover their bodies with excrement, as we shall see shortly. Almost nothing has been preserved of the rich pre-Islamic Iranian literary heritage, although its contents can be reconstructed fairly reliably from the reflection of these traditions in New Persian, especially in the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi and Gurgani's *Vis o Ramin*. In these texts, and in Persian literature more generally, some of the redoubtable figures of the religious literature, notably the "sorcerer" (*jadu*) and the "witch" (*pari*), have often become fairly innocuous human or spiritual beings, or even terms of endearment.

Between these two corpora there are very few primary texts, and it is important to realize that the two clusters mentioned are related to each other—the Middle Persian texts rely on the Avestan ones and frequently consist of adaptations and/or interpretations of Avestan texts, some of which have been lost in their original language.[5] It is frequently impossible, therefore, to figure out whether the continued use of a certain *topos*—the *daevayasna*, the *yatu*, and the *pairika*—shows a continuous awareness of these classes of beings among the Zoroastrians, or whether they are there mainly *because* they were mentioned in the Avesta and emerged in commentarial traditions on the Avestan texts only.

1 *Yatus, pairikas* and *daevayasnas* in the Avestan Texts

Three distinct categories of evil beings in the Avesta must be discussed here: the *yatu* (usually translated as "sorcerer"), the *pairika* ("witch") and the *daevayasna*, "he who worships the *daevas*." Since the Avestan texts are chiefly liturgical documents destined to be heard by the gods and, initially at least, by a human audience well aware of their meaning, they frequently simply list

5 See A. Cantera, *Studien zur Pahlavi-Übersetzung des Avesta* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004) for an important *vue d'ensemble*.

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such evil beings, without explaining their exact meaning. Since the case of the *daevayasna* seems to be clearest, we shall start with this category.

Zoroastrian texts make a strict distinction between deities who are to be worshipped and deities who may not be worshipped. The former are most often referred to as *yazata*, "a being who is worshipped," in older texts also as *ahura*, "lord." The beings who may not be worshipped are known as *daeva*, a word that originally meant "god," but developed in meaning to "(false) god who may not be worshipped," usually abbreviated as "demon." It is difficult to explain the genesis of these double categories, especially in light of the usage in Indian Vedic texts, where *devas* are gods and *asuras* a special class of gods (who were demoted to the ranks of demons only in late and post-Vedic times). It is clear, however, that one of the chief elements of early Zoroastrian rituals was the explicit choice in honour of which deities rituals were to be performed, and which deities were to be excluded from worship.[6] It is this choice that establishes the two "communities" of the Avestan texts: the believers—those who worship Ahura Mazda—and the devil-worshippers. The worship of Ahura Mazda was introduced, according to the tradition, by Zarathushtra, widely seen as the "founder" of the Zoroastrian religion. The texts usually attributed to him, the Gathas (and the other Old Avestan texts), are in fact hymnic compositions in honour of Ahura Mazda, in which the theme of inviting this particular god, together with his beneficent spiritual creations, is omnipresent.[7] Against this is the option chosen by those who reject Zarathushtra's words, and are therefore not members of the community behind the texts, the *daevayasnas* (which means "he who worships the *daevas*"). For they do not worship Ahura Mazda, but instead invite evil beings, the *daevas*, to their sacrifice, thus strengthening the forces of evil, through which they prolong human suffering.

Although there are, in later Avestan texts, also enemies whose difference is expressed in "ethnic" (or possibly "tribal" or "clanic") terms, the *daevayasnas* are the chief enemies of the "we-group" of the Avestan texts. Their fatefully wrong choice extends much further than the rituals they perform or the deities they worship. They are in every respect the opposites of the Mazda-worshippers and they are presented, sometimes vaguely, sometimes in stark detail, as mortal foes whose activities permanently threaten the permanence of the Mazda-worshipping communities. From this, scholars have deduced (largely following the Zoroastrian tradition in this) an historical scenario that

6 This has been stressed especially by J. Kellens, *Le Panthéon de l'Avesta ancien* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1994).

7 The most useful English translation is H. Humbach, *The Gathas of Zarathushtra and the Other Old Avestan Texts* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1991).

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goes like this: towards the end of the second millennium BCE or the beginning of the first, a gifted fully trained priest of the Iranian religion (not otherwise specified), while pondering the ritual tasks entrusted to him, developed a different view of the reality underlying the world he lived in. This world, he intuited, was the work of a god—Ahura Mazda—who therefore was the chief being to whom rituals were to be dedicated. He celebrated this god (unknown from non-Zoroastrian sources) in inspired ritual verse, largely in a traditional poetic vocabulary. But this god, in whose creation humans lived and toiled, was not alone; for he had an evil opponent, who was equally active in the world and constantly attempted to seduce humans to choose his side in a cosmic battle that the two powers—aided by heavenly and demonic hosts—were waging against each other. From the moment of Zarathushtra's "revelation," therefore, there were two kinds of people: those who accepted his message and repudiated their former lives, and those who did not, but continued to practise their inherited religion. This gave scope for a history of the world in which Zarathushtra's activities were a decisive turning point, at which moment the true religion became established in the world. There were benefits for those who accepted it—a blessed afterlife and the promise of being saved at the end of time, when evil will be vanquished—and punishment for those who did not. But these benefits were not immediately obvious in the lives of the first believers, for they were but a small band engulfed in a larger society that mocked and persecuted them, as it had mocked and persecuted Zarathushtra until the moment that he made his first politically important convert, Vishtaspa. From that moment onward, the religion began to spread and conquer the world, with help provided by the *yazatas*, who were praised in their hymns (known as *Yasht*) for ceaselessly supporting those of the good religion in their hard-won struggles against their enemies, who are known by many titles, including that of *daevayasna*.

Whether this scenario can count as a 'history' of early Zoroastrianism is hotly debated among specialists today.[8] There is a substantial temporal gap between the old Avestan texts and the rest of the Avesta that is thought to be several centuries. It is clear that by the time of the composition (or final crystallization) of the texts in Young Avestan, the 'history' of the religion as retold above had firmly developed and accompanied (together with a variety of ritual and practical rules for living a religious life) the religion as it spread

8 Contrast, for example, Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism I*, with J. Kellens, *La quatrième naissance de Zarathushtra* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 2006). For an introductory overview see M. Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras. Geschichte—Gegenwart—Rituale* I (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2002), 21–68.

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among the Iranians. That is to say, whoever the 'historical' Vishtaspa was (his name is mentioned in the Gathas), in Younger Avestan times he was, undisputedly, the ruler under whose sovereignty the religion had begun to thrive. This brought him to war with surrounding tribes and rulers and it is in narratives about these wars (vaguely alluded to in the *Yashts*, chiefly by identifying the opponents by name) that the word *daevayasna* is frequently used. The heroes of the religion, that is, fight against their enemies, who are their enemies *because* they did not accept that religion. The identity of the people behind the Avestan texts, therefore, is defined in *religious* terms: it was, in other words, not one's birth, language or ethnicity that regulated belonging to the "we-group," but one's religion. Since the texts were composed for ritual purposes, to serve those already converted, they had no need to dwell upon the characteristics of these *daevayasnas* in any meaningful way. Although there are some cases where ritual activity of '*daeva*-worshipping' peoples is described in somewhat greater detail,[9] this is usually not the case.

That there is some reality behind the image of the *daevayasnas* as the chief enemies of the Zoroastrians is suggested by a central passage in the Avestan *Yasna*, the *Fravarane* (Y. 12), which is seen by many as the formal declaration by which a person entered the community of the Mazda-worshippers. Apart from repudiating the *daevas* and embracing the teachings concerning the Ahuras as taught by Zarathushtra, there are formal declarations in which the candidate promises no longer to steal cattle from and burn down the dwelling-places of the Mazda-worshippers as well as forswearing the company of the *daevas* and those who worship them.[10]

In what may be the most recent text of the Avestan corpus we find almost the opposite situation; for here, any Zoroastrian who wants to practise medicine must perform his skills first three times on a *daevayasna*; if the three patients survive the operation, the candidate may be allowed to treat Zoroastrians, if not, he can never practise medicine.[11] Zoroastrians are encouraged, moreover, to confiscate arable land, sources of water, corn for sowing and other crucial

9 Notably Yt. 14.54–56, describing the ways in which the Vyambura (otherwise unknown), "who worship the *daevas*," perform their rituals. Their chief mistakes are the use of the wrong kind of plants and the spilling of blood as part of the ritual as well as, possibly, some kind of possession cult. See for this particular interpretation M. Schwartz, "Viiāmburas and Kafirs," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 4, (1990): 251–255. This seems to be one of the rare cases where possibly a real 'non-Zoroastrian' type of ritual is described.

10 A useful translation can be found in M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 57–58.

11 Vd. 7.36–40.

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possessions from the *daevayasnas*.[12] Similarly, in the Avestan parts of the *Nerangestan*, sacrificial animals that have been stolen or confiscated from *daevayasnas* are offerings that will please the gods.[13]

If we thus attempt to trace the image of the *daevayasnas*, there are various different aspects to them. While originally belonging to the same people as the Mazda-worshippers, they are distinguished from them by their religion, and its attendant rituals, which are seen as demonic in origin. In narratives of the early stages of the religion, they appear as the redoubtable enemies of the Zoroastrians, persecuting them, stealing their cattle and burning down their homes. In later texts, finally, they appear mainly as the victims of the now triumphant communities of the Zoroastrians, being deprived without compensation or punishment of their lives, cattle, and other sources of income. In itself, this supports the notion of the spread of the religion among Iranian peoples in the East, with those who followed an earlier religion gradually dwindling in numbers. There is, however, very little that is directly recorded about their rituals or beliefs and the term is frequently used metaphorically, as we shall see shortly.

The only real indication about what was wrong in their rituals is the statement that they performed their sacrifices at night. This is mentioned in Yt. 5.93–94, where Zarathushtra asks the goddess Aredvi Sura Anahita what happens with the libations that the *daevayasnas* bring to her "after sunset." Unfortunately, the goddess' answer is difficult to comprehend, but it seems to be clear that she will not accept those libations, which strengthen the forces of evil instead.

All other indications that were occasionally combined to draw a more coherent picture of the *daevayasnas* appear to be governed by a different kind of logic, that associates them with sources of great evil. That is to say, these texts do not interpret the *daevayasnas* as such, but interpret other sources of evil and locate the *daevayasnas* among them. Thus, Zarathushtra asks Ahura Mazda: "Where is the *daeva*? Where is he who worships the *daevas*?" Ahura Mazda answers: "In those *dakhmas*, Spitama Zarathushtra, these buildings which have been built upon this earth, in which dead men are placed. There is the *daeva*, there is he who worships the *daevas* (…)."[14] The point of this passage is not to state that *daevayasnas* (regularly) gather at the places where corpses are brought to be eaten by vultures and dogs (as Zoroastrian

12 Vd. 19.26.

13 N. 36.4.

14 Vd. 7.53–54. In Vd. 8.58, mention is made of the worst kind of people, who gather at these places "after sunset."

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purity laws prescribe), but that these places are an important source of evil. Similarly, men who engage in anal intercourse are equated with *daevayasnas*, not because those who worship the demons do this regularly for religious purposes, but because it is seen as a great evil.[15]

The evidence for the construction of the image of the *daevayasna* is thus, on the whole, fairly meagre. There are few cases from which we (can) learn anything about specific types of ritual activity for which they were condemned, because they were condemned *in toto* as exemplars of depravity. It is important to bear this in mind when we shall confront this tradition with the afterlife of these persons in Pahlavi literature. First, however, we need to confront some other classes of sinister creatures.

2 The *yatu* and the *pairika*

These two classes of beings, the *yatu* and the *pairika* (of which the former is male and the latter female) are conventionally translated as "sorcerers" and "witches." Like the *daevayasnas*, they are chiefly named (although this only occurs in the case of the *pairika*, such as the *pairika* Knanthaiti), especially as evil beings to be overcome. They are also, again like the *daevayasnas*, frequently found in lists of evil beings with whom Zoroastrians are not supposed to deal. We shall argue here that the notion of "real" *daeva*-worshippers from the Avesta has influenced interpretations of the *daeva*-worshippers in the Pahlavi texts. But in this case it seems obvious that the reverse situation applies as well. That is, the fact that Middle Persian *jadug* means "sorcerer" has certainly influenced understanding of the Avestan *yatu* as "sorcerer," for this figure appears to have originated as a supernatural evil being.[16]

The evidence for this etiology comes chiefly from consideration of the Indian cognate word *yatu*, which denotes a class of demons, and from the Avestan passages which list these beings in the company of the *daevas*. It has been suggested that the process through which the demonic being became a human agent of evil began already in Avestan times, since the term *daeva* then established itself as the generic term for evil spiritual beings. In some cases,

15 Although it is all but forgotten nowadays, earlier scholars often attempted to combine such sources to reconstruct non-Zoroastrian or pre-Zoroastrian types of religion. See, for example, G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1965) 23–27; further references (and a critique) can be found in A. de Jong, "Jeh the Primal Whore? Observations on Zoroastrian Misogyny," in *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions*, ed. R. Kloppenborg and W.J. Hanegraaff (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 15–41.

16 Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* I, 85.

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moreover, the later tradition (obviously in an attempt to interpret Avestan texts and names) includes evil humans from the Avesta in either of these categories. Thus, famously, the wicked Akhtya, who is mentioned in Yt. 5.81–83 as an evil person who asked the hero Yoisht of the Fryana family ninety-nine evil questions, became the "sorcerer" (*jadug*) Axt in the Pahlavi *Book of Joisht i Friyan*, where the questions are asked and answered, and where Akht is constantly advised by the Evil Spirit himself, since Akht, as a *jadug*, has the capacity of going to the Evil Spirit for counsel. In the Avesta, however, he is not a *yatu*.

The situation is similar, it seems, with the *pairika*, "a class of female supernatural beings of malicious character, who seek to beguile and harm makind."[17] The three *pairikas* named in the Avesta, Mush (i.e. "Mouse," Y. 16.8), Khnanthaiti (Vd. 1.9; 19.5), and Duzhyairya (Yt. 8.51; 54) are indeed supernatural beings who cause great harm. In the case of the latter, the battle fought by the god Tishtrya ("Sirius") against the *pairika* Duzhyairya ("whose year is bad") is generally seen in astrological terms, with the "fixed" star Sirius opposing the pernicious influence of the "shooting stars" whom Duzhyairya leads, in an attempt by Tishtrya to safeguard next year's crops.[18]

Whereas the *yatu* clearly developed in meaning into a human "sorcerer", the *pairika*, it seems, never lost her basic supernatural interpretation. These evil female beings, however, were believed to be capable of impersonating humans (something the *daevas* could not do after Zarathushtra had recited the Ahuna Vairya prayer, which "broke their form"). It was possible, therefore, to denounce women as *pairikas*, that is, demonic beings posing as humans, which may have led to the word being translated as "witch." Apart from literary conventions, however, such accusations are unknown, unlike the more general accusation of "sorcery" (*jadugih*), which occurs regularly in legal and theological texts in Middle Persian. It is to these that we must turn now.

3 The *dewesn* and the *jadug* in Middle Persian Texts

In 1955, R.C. Zaehner suggested that an organized "sect" of devil-worshippers (*dewesn*) had existed in Sasanian Iran.[19] The evidence for this religion is both abundant and deeply problematic, as we shall see. Zaehner reached his conclusion by combining a variety of sources and taking most of them as literally

17 Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* 1, 85.

18 A. Panaino, *Tištrya II. The Iranian Myth of the Star Sirius* (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1995).

19 R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan. A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 13–15.

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as possible. His chief evidence came from the *Denkard*, a ninth-century compendium of Zoroastrian theology. The *Denkard* consists of several books, some of which go back to the *Zand*, the translation of the Avesta (including parts of the Avesta that were lost in their original language). The parts he used, however, chiefly from the third (and longest) book of the *Denkard*,[20] clearly belong to the ninth century proper, for they contain many chapters in which the authorities behind the text engage seriously and systematically with various points of Muslim theology and doctrine. The third book of the *Denkard* is without a doubt the most ambitious of all Zoroastrian texts, in that it contains clear evidence for the participation of Zoroastrians in the general intellectual culture of the Abbasid caliphate. It is, therefore, much more systematic than most other Zoroastrian texts and the chapters quoted by Zaehner seem to bear this out. They depart from the notion that there are three "types" of religion: "sorcery," "religions of evil doctrine" and "Zoroastrianism." The distinction between these three was the status of the creator.[21] "Sorcery" (*jadugih*) was the type of religion that taught that the Creator was evil, the "religion of evil doctrine" taught that the Creator was responsible for both good and evil, and Zoroastrianism, finally, taught that the Creator was wholly good and incapable of doing evil. There is no doubt that the chief intention of the chapter is to show that Zoroastrianism is the only reasonable and true religion, because it avoids the absurdity to attribute evil and imperfection to the highest god. That there were people who believed that God was, ultimately, responsible for both good and evil (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) is a recurring trope in this book and it seems that the first option (*jadugih*) was there only to round off the general picture, in providing the absolute opposite of the Zoroastrian position.

Zaehner's chief evidence came from a later chapter of the *Denkard*, in which (following a similar 'systematic' pattern) the characteristics of *jadugih* were set out:

> The perverted, devilish, unrighteous rite of the 'mystery of the sorcerers' consists in praising Ahreman, the destroyer, in prowling around in great secrecy, in keeping home, body, and clothes in a state of filthiness and stench, in smearing the body with dead matter and excrement, in causing discomfort to the gods and joy to the demons, in chanting services to the demons and calling on them by name as befits their activity, in the worship of the demons and false religion, in thinking in accordance with the Evil Mind, in false speech and unrighteous action—the disreputable

20 J. de Menasce, *Le troisième livre du Denkart* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1973).

21 Dk. 3.151 (de Menasce).

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> sorcerers and villains—and in all else that befits the devilish and is far from the godly.[22]

In arguing for the reality of the existence of these people, Zaehner repeatedly stressed the "secrecy" they observed, but left the practical question how this secrecy was accomplished by people who smeared their bodies with excrement unanswered. It has been generally accepted, therefore, that this passage does *not* give actual information on a truly existing counter-religion, but is phrased wholly in the "language of estrangement" well known also from other sources.[23] Zoroastrians were very particular about ritual purity, staying away as far as possible from sources of pollution, which came in two categories: excrements and dead matter (*hikhr* and *nasa*). These two categories are not mentioned lightly in this text, but are used, together with similar mirror-images (invoking the Evil Spirit and the demons by name, etc.) to remind Zoroastrians of who they were and what they were supposed to do. Zaehner brought himself further problems by arguing simultaneously that the religion of the "devil-worshippers" was, in fact, an old religion suppressed by Zoroastrianism *and* a willful inversion of Zoroastrian norms, which is strongly reminiscent of similar debates over the interpretation of European "witchcraft" accusations.

This is, in fact, the normal pattern of the interpretation of the *dewesn* (from Avestan *daevayasna*) in the Pahlavi books. They continue the Avestan tradition of the *daevayasna*, in representing generically the (religious) enemies of the Zoroastrians. Two further aspects need to be highlighted here. One is the fact that the *dewesns* are rarely, if at all, equated with followers of (known) other religions; the second that the term *dewesnih* is regularly used to interpret ritual mistakes committed (wittingly or unwittingly) by Zoroastrians themselves.

As we have seen, there is a huge temporal gap between the Avesta and the Pahlavi books, spanning approximately a millennium (from the younger texts of the Avesta to the mid-Sasanian period). Very little information has been retrieved from other sources to fill this gap. In one inscription of the Achaemenid king Xerxes I (r. 485–465 BCE),[24] mention is made of people worshipping the *daivas* and of a *daivadana*, a place where the *daivas* are worshipped. This, the king declares, he destroyed, upon which he forbade the worship of the *daivas*. Much has been made of this inscription (the *daivadana*

22 Dk. 3.169 (de Menasce), trans. Zaehner, *Zurvan*, 14.

23 J.Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," *ANRW* II.16.1, (1978), 425–439, 425.

24 This is the famous Daiva-inscription (XPh); see R.G. Kent, *Old Persian. Grammar—Texts—Lexicon* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1953), 150–152.

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has been identified with Greek and Mesopotamian temples), but it is by now generally accepted that it does not, in fact, refer to any particular activity or decision on the part of the king. Instead, it must be interpreted as a declaration of his own piety: the worship of Ahura Mazda (here again juxtaposed to that of the *daivas*) is what is expected of a devout—and, hence, successful—King of the Persians.[25] Xerxes' declaration fits, therefore, the traditional view of the mutual opposition between Mazda-worshippers and *daeva*-worshippers known from the Avesta. The same is true, it has been suggested, of Plutarch's description of the ritual sacrifice of a wolf (in darkness) in order to avert evil, almost every element of which reappears in Zoroastrian descriptions of the activities of the *daevayasnas*.[26]

While it is thus impossible to add some substance to the imagery employed in the two clusters of Zoroastrian sources, one crucial development is absolutely clear. This is the fact that the religions and societies that surrounded the Zoroastrians in the course of their long history had changed dramatically between the "Avestan" and the Sasanian period. If we imagine the early Zoroastrians as a small community living among nations who spoke more or less the same language and lived in more or less the same, small-scale tribal and pastoral societies, but worshipped different gods, this situation changed in the course of the first millennium BCE, when Iranians settled in the land now named after them and became neighbours to the civilizations of the Ancient Near East, including the Greeks, many of whose territories they eventually conquered. There is no indication at all to suggest that they interpreted the religions of their new neighbours and fellow inhabitants of the Persian Empire by the traditional category of *daevayasnas*. The Achaemenids have often been praised for having shown "tolerance" to the religions of others (in the sense of refraining from destroying their temples and from forcing their new subject peoples to adopt the Persian religion). Although this is a pleasant reputation, it is based on the conviction (drawing chiefly on interpretations of the Avesta and the Pahlavi books as "normative sources" of Zoroastrianism) that their religion urges them to behave otherwise. As far as can be made out, however, it seems that the Persians wisely decided to leave all customary laws of their newly incorporated territories intact, including those that belong to "our" category of religion.[27] They never attempted, as an official policy, to convert

25 H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "The Personality of Xerxes, King of Kings," in *Archaeologica Iranica et Orientalis*, ed. L. de Meyer and E. Haerinck, (Gent: Peeters, 1989), 549–561.

26 Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 46; see A. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi. Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 177–180.

27 See A. de Jong, "Religion at the Achaemenid Court," in *Der Achämenidenhof*, ed. B. Jacobs and R. Rollinger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010).

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other nations to their religion, although some ancient peoples (notably the Armenians and the Georgians) did.[28]

By the Sasanian period, however, the religious world of antiquity was undergoing pervasive changes. In the course of the Sasanian period, the traditional religions of the Near East slowly gave way to new types of religion, in the case of the Sasanian Empire chiefly Christianity and Manichaeism, both actively missionary traditions who (unlike the Jews) did not consider Iranians out of bounds for the spread of their new message. Sasanian Zoroastrians often suspected the activities of the Evil Spirit behind these upstart religions and persecuted their followers periodically (especially in an attempt to bring Zoroastrian apostates back to their own religion), but—again—they *never* interpreted their religion as belonging to the "*daeva*-worshippers." Although they objected to certain rituals—a famous case is the accusation that the Jews sacrificed young animals, which is forbidden in Zoroastrianism (as is, for example, the picking of unripe fruits and vegetables)[29]—and abhorred the lifestyle of Christian monks and nuns, the chief polemics against their religious competitors concern elements of belief, notably the question of the origin of evil. All this leaves the *dewesns* in a strange vacuum.

What confuses the picture even more is the fact that in the most extensive discussions of rituals qualified as *dewesnih* (or *dewezagih*, both meaning "devil-worship"), the term is used for ritual mistakes made by (otherwise ordinary) Zoroastrians, especially priests. The clearest evidence comes from two priestly texts, the *Herbedestan* and the *Nerangestan*;[30] the first is a treatise on priestly studies, the second on priestly rituals. Two different patterns can be observed. The first interprets the *dewesn* as a follower of a different religion (usually identified as *an-er*, "non-Iranian"), the second as someone who has made mistakes in the rituals.

In the *Herbedestan*, for example, several questions are asked about the admissibility of *daevayasnas* as students and as teachers. These *daevayasnas* appear as a category of people, invariably associated with a class of beings known as *tanu.peretha* (Middle Persian *tanapuhl*), someone who is in a state of mortal sin (literally "whose body is forfeit"). The teachers in question are to be thought of as itinerant instructors in the religion, who accept pupils on

28 J.R. Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1987).

29 S. Shaked, "Zoroastrian Polemics against Jews in the Sasanian and early Islamic Period," in *Irano-Judaica* II, ed. S. Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1990), 85–104, p. 93 (Dk. 3.288).

30 F.M. Kotwal and P.G. Kreyenbroek, *The Herbedestan and Nerangestan* (Paris: Peeters 1992–2003; 4 vols.).

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their wanderings in order to instruct them in the religion, that is to say, to teach them the religious texts in their ritual language and explain their meaning. Pupils, in other words, had to be brought to them and, subsequently, restored to their families after they had finished their education. The question comes up, therefore, whether one should restore a *daevayasna* child, or the child of a mortal sinner, to his family; the answer is that in this case it is a sin to do so (whereas in all other cases it would be a sin *not* to restore the child to its family).[31] The case of *daevayasna* teachers is unclear, but studying with them is not forbidden categorically, but allowed in cases of dire necessity.[32] The same is true for accepting to teach *daevayasna* children, which can only be done when one's life depends on it, for in itself it consitutes the sin of "giving a tongue to a wolf."[33] The impression is, therefore, that these *daevayasnas* are a further illustration of the *tanuperetha* category, that is, Zoroastrians who have sinned to such an extent that they deserve to be killed, not adherents of a different religion.

In the *Nerangestan*, this pattern is much clearer. "Devil-worship" there constitutes, for example, the failure to recite the proper words in the ritual,[34] not finishing the ritual in its proper time and thereby allowing the temple fire to grow cold,[35] accidentally or intentionally spilling some liquid,[36] or celebrating two rituals as one.[37] The notion here seems to be something that is widely attested throughout Zoroastrian literature: that ritual mistakes produce the opposite effect of properly performed rituals. That is to say, if someone performs a ritual without the necessary qualifications, lacking the proper state of purity, or burdened by sins that have not been expiated by confessing them, his ritual automatically strengthens the forces of darkness.

4 Accusations of *jadugih*

The category of *jadugih* in Middle Persian texts offers its own problems. Whereas it seems to be the case that an official accusation of *dewesnih* was not an option—this is a purely theological and literary term—there is some evidence to suggest that individuals could be accused of *jadugih*. This emerges

31 H. 11.
32 H. 18.
33 H. 19.6.
34 N. 6.6.
35 N. 30.5.
36 N. 50.5–6.
37 N. 52.18.

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particularly from the summaries of the legal parts of the Avesta in the eighth book of the *Denkard*, especially the book on the "ordeal" (*war*).[38] Since this is a summary of an otherwise lost text, it does not give much information, but it makes a few things clear. The accusation of *jadugih* could be brought forward by persons who believed that their opponents had made them ill, but there were also other signs to indicate the activities of a *jadug*. These needed to be tested, by undergoing an ordeal, which was a term covering a variety of religious rites, ranging from fairly innocent to absolutely deadly (pouring melted metal over the body or tongue of the accused, who would only be acquitted if he escaped unharmed). That these accusations were really brought forward seems likely, even though the largest source on Sasanian law, the *Book of a Thousand Judgements* only contains a single reference to it.[39] It is a difficult passage, which seems to imply that ordinary rules of prudent legal procedure could be broken in the case of the accusation of *jadugih*, a truly terrifying prospect, which is perhaps supported by another decision in a Zoroastrian text, that *jadugih* is one of the cases (the other ones being infedelity ("whoring"), disobedience and a variety of ritual transgressions) for which men can divorce their wives without their consent, without legal proceedings or compensation.[40] It is to be noted, at any rate, that increasingly, in Middle Persian and New Persian Zoroastrian texts, *jadugih* is something associated with women. To illustrate this, one can point at the famous *Book of Arda Wiraz*, in which a pious Zoroastrian visits heaven and hell and describes the delights of Paradise and the torments of hell in every detail.[41] Surprisingly, *jadugs* are not omnipresent in these texts; in fact, there are no *jadugs* as such in hell,[42] but *jadugih* is mentioned three times. The first case is in AWN 35, where Wiraz sees a woman who chews on her own corpse. She is the soul of the person who practised *jadugih* in the world. Then, in AWN 76, Wiraz sees women who cut off their own breasts, whose bellies are gnawed by dogs (surprisingly, for the dog is a holy animal to Zoroastrians and one would not expect to find them in hell) and who have to stand on red-hot copper. These are the souls of women who committed a variety of sins, including that of using sorcery for consultation.

38 Dk. 8.42.

39 MHD 78.10; see M. Macuch, *Rechtskasuistik und Gerichtspraxis zu Beginn des siebenten Jahrhunderts in Iran. Die Rechtssammlung des Farrohmard i Wahraman* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1993), 520.

40 REA 7.5–7; see Macuch, *Rechtskasuistik*, 77–78.

41 P. Gignoux, *Le livre d'Arda Viraz* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1984).

42 They are only mentioned as residents of hell in one passage (AWN 5.5), where they torment the souls of the sinners, together with the *devs*, and therefore presumably in continuation of the old, Avestan, tradition of the *yatu* as some kind of evil spiritual being.

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Finally, in AWN 81, Wiraz sees the soul of a woman subjected to similar gruesome punishments, who is punished because of sexual offences ("whoring") and because she practised *jadugih*. Women on the whole are massively overrepresented in Wiraz's tour of hell, but it is to be noted that it is only women who are punished specifically for their activities in the realm of *jadugih*. What these texts, examples of which can easily be multiplied, do *not* tell us, however, is what *jadugih* was, apart from the fact that it was evil. This will bring us to an interim conclusion, following which we shall have a look at some documentary evidence for types of ritual activity that are not, as a rule, mentioned in Zoroastrian sources.

5 Interim Conclusion

The present writer is fully aware of the fact that the discussion of the construction of ambiguous or unsanctioned ritual he was asked to prepare for this volume offers very little indeed to those with a comparative interest in the subject. This can partly be explained by the nature of the sources, which are religious documents often far removed from social reality. Most of the texts, in fact, are priestly documents and since they were composed by and for religious specialists who knew perfectly well what they were talking about, they frequently give us no more than tantalizing clues. This is not restricted to ritual at all; although the names of "heretics" (another type of enemy, the traditional term for which was *ahlomog*, another calque from Avestan) are often to be found, they are usually only mentioned as a class, or as defeated opponents, with no indication of what it was they actually believed or taught. The main point of all these texts seems to be the construction of desirable forms of ritual, behaviour, and belief. These three realms of religious activity are all governed by the one overarching theme of Zoroastrianism, which is that believers are Ahura Mazda's chief helpers in the battle against evil, and those who do not believe his chief enemies.

This Zoroastrian "dualism" cuts through all dimensions and aspects of existence. Literally everything one can imagine belongs to either side, with no middle ground. This is true of the physical aspects of creation, most of which are attributed to the creator Ahura Mazda, but some of which were introduced by the Evil Spirit. Well known examples of the latter's contribution to our world are certain animals known as *khrafstra*, the killing of which was an important act of piety (this category includes felines, reptiles, rodents and insects), bark and thorns on trees and plants, mountains, salt water, and smoke, as well as, of course, diseases and death itself. This dualism manifests itself also within

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human society, where some humans are good and others evil; in the realm of language (though very unsystematically) with the development of a specific *daevic* vocabulary, used only for the body parts and activities of evil beings; and, of course, in the distinction made between the one true religion and all other faiths.

Evidently, within such a system there is little interest in the particularities of "wrong" types of religion or ritual. All that is needed is to establish, with as much precision as possible, what the requirements of the true religion are. This is done occasionally, as we have seen, by imagining its opposite, but much more frequently by giving detailed expositions on how Zoroastrians are supposed to lead their lives. Within these expositions, the purity laws are the most frequently discussed subject, with special attention given to a variety of rules and rituals that were meant to protect the world from the impurity it produces, in the two classes of excrements and corpses.

Several scholars, when thinking about this Zoroastrian "dualism," have intuited that Zoroastrians must have been very actively involved in counteracting the activities of the demons, that they—in other words—would have a rich variety of ritual activity specifically designed to ward off the influence of the evil beings. This is not really the case, however, for two different reasons. The first is the general rule that the evil beings should be given as little attention as possible, especially in ritual settings. They are, it is true, cursed in prayers and some priestly rituals, and they are (as we shall see) specifically cast out, or bound, in the realm of personal protective rituals. There are, in the Avesta and especially in later sources several types of powerful words and phrases intended for this specific purpose. These are known especially from the Islamic period, when they are referred to as *nerang* (a word of many different meanings, including "ritual") or *ta'viz* (an Arabic loanword for amulet, from a root meaning "to protect"). They were written on paper and carried on the body or affixed to the walls of houses (as they still are among living Zoroastrians). They were usually written by priests (who were the only copyists of religious texts), who had to recite the protective words while writing them, for otherwise it would not work. Most of them contain phrases from the Avesta, with set prayers added and sometimes continuing with Middle Persian invocations and words to cast out or bind evil beings.[43]

43 See A. Panaino, "Magic I. Magical elements in the Avesta and Nerang Literature," at www.iranica.com; S. Shaked, "Spells and Incantations between Iranian and Aramaic," in *Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mitteliranischer Zeit*, ed. D. Durkin-Meisterernst, C. Reck, and D. Weber (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2009), 233–244.

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The second reason why specific anti-demonic rituals are rare in Zoroastrian practice, is the notion that the Zoroastrian rituals and maintenance of the purity laws themselves were the most powerful weapon against evil in this world. There are countless cases where this is made clear. Kindling the household fire at night kills a thousand *devs* and twice as many "sorcerers and witches." Making the highest category of temple fire blaze up at midnight kills a million of them.[44] When Zarathushtra spoke the words of the Ahuna Vairya prayer on earth, he broke the shape of the demons, causing them to hide under the earth[45] and making it impossible for them to appear in human shape.[46] Thus, reciting a single Ahuna Vairya prayer, or any other of the daily prayers, is a huge weapon against the activities and influence of evil in this world.

There are, of course, in human life cases where more specifically directed rituals are wanted: disease, misfortune, famine, love and desire, war, death, etc. For these, too, Zoroastrians were advised to use the "ordinary" ritual repertoire of their religion, that is, asking a priest to perform certain rituals for them, with special intentions added, or specifically selected deities honoured. The *nerang* seem to belong to this category. There is no indication at all that Zoroastrians interpreted this type of ritual activity as something separated from other types of ritual. This may be due to the nature of our sources, but it may also be explained in the terms suggested above, that the repertoire of Zoroastrian rituals—including certain elements that appear in this volume in the section on "Materials of magic"—extended its wholesome effects over all dimensions of human lives.

6 Appendix: Gems and Bowls

For archaeologists and specialists in material culture, Zoroastrianism is a nightmare. In spite of the extremely long history of this religion—one of the few religions of the ancient world to have survived to the present day—the archaeological record of Zoroastrianism is astonishingly meagre. The main reason for this (apart from the fact that Iran remains archaeologically underexplored and that, being at the crossroads of civilizations, it has a long record of being reduced to ruins by invading armies from the North and the West) is the fact that Zoroastrianism kept its original "mobile" character for a very long period. Rituals, that is to say, were performed in natural settings, specially prepared

44 SDB 17.
45 Y. 9.15.
46 SDB 4.

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for the occasion by the drawing of a set of furrows in the earth, which were subsequently abandoned. The substances of ritual were fire, water, and edible products (plants, milk, meat, and butter) and the ritual implements were chiefly of a domestic nature. Zoroastrianism is, therefore, extremely difficult to trace archaeologically.

We have already met with the situation that Zoroastrians did not write down their religious literature and, although the religion itself survives to the present day, the eleven-hundred years between the Arab conquests and the beginning of the emancipation, and prosperity, of the Zoroastrian communities of Iran and India have made the chances of survival of Zoroastrian manuscripts and artefacts very limited. The one category of objects that has survived in enormous quantities from the Sasanian period (alongside coins) are stamp seals. In itself, this is interesting, for it shows that many inhabitants of the Sasanian empire possessed a seal. Most of these Sasanian seals bear a simple decoration, sometimes with a text containing a pious wish ("Trust in the gods"), or a name. More elaborate seals have also survived, as well as the clay *bullae* in which their impression was stamped to seal documents (the documents themselves did not, as a rule, survive). Together with coins, therefore, stamp seals are an indispensable source for Sasanian history. Within this huge corpus, a number of seals stand out—as is the case in the Graeco-Roman world—either by their size, or by the choice of their design or by being engraved in the positive (that is to say, so that the inscription could be read on the seal itself, rather than on its impression). These have been brought together under the label "magical seals" in a recent important publication.[47] There are various connections between these Sasanian seals and similar amuletic stones from the West, especially in the particular iconography of the uterus symbol, which suggest that these items of iconography came to Iran from the West.[48] Their function is obviously protective and it is assumed that they were worn on the body for specific purposes. In some, extremely rare, cases, long inscriptions were written on them (not always in the positive, but also in the negative), which contain protective, binding, spells against several demonic beings, some of whom are unknown from Zoroastrian sources.[49] This fact, and the fact that such seals are never

47 R. Gyselen, *Sceaux magiques en Iran sassanide* (Paris: Peeters, 1995).

48 This is a more general aspect of the iconography of Sasanian seals; see R. Gyselen, "Note de glyptique sassanide. 6. Le phénomène des motifs iconographiques communs à l'Iran sassanide et au bassin méditerranéen," in *Eran ud Aneran. Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen dem Sassanidenreich und der Mittelmeerwelt*, ed. J. Wiesehöfer and Ph. Huyse (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 83–103.

49 See especially P.O. Harper, P.O. Skjaervø, L. Gorelick, and A.J. Gwinnett, "A Seal-Amulet of the Sasanian Era: Imagery and Typology, the Inscription, and Technical Comments," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 6, (1992): 43–58.

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mentioned in extant Zoroastrian literature, is a good reminder of the fact that Zoroastrian sources are extremely limited in scope and remain silent about important dimensions of human life.

This is even more clear from the sensational discovery of large numbers of incantation bowls from Sasanian Mesopotamia, discussed elsewhere in this volume. Even though these bowls were chiefly written by Jews, Mandaeans, and other non-Zoroastrian inhabitants of Mesopotamia, they contain not only an astonishing amount of Iranian personal names (and place names), but also a variety of divine and demonic beings of Iranian origin, most of whom are again unknown from Zoroastrian sources.[50] The question they pose for the history of Zoroastrianism is how Zoroastrian clients who ordered these bowls interpreted them. This is obviously a speculative endeavour, but it is perhaps not too far-fetched to believe that Zoroastrians could think of them as one particular, local, variety of the type of powerful amulets they would (also) ask their own priests to make, relying in this case, however, on specialists from neighbouring communities. They did so more often, for other special crafts, such as astrology and medicine, for which they used Babylonian traditions and Christian specialists, respectively. It has been suggested that the spiritual world of the bowls shows signs of a "popular religion" in Sasanian Babylonia,[51] which would be very compatible with the fact that the various communities in that area seemed to agree on a number of other subjects, such as the idea that there were various illuminators ("prophets") sent to this earth to instruct humanity, or the notion that governance of the world was delegated to a secondary deity.[52] What Zoroastrian priests thought of these bowls, or of the use of non-Zoroastrian specialists for religious purposes, we do not know, for they do not mention them.

50 S. Shaked, "Bagdāana, King of the Demons, and other Iranian Terms in Babylonian Aramaic Magic," in *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*, ed. (Leiden: Peeters, 1985), 511–525.

51 S. Shaked, "Popular Religion in Sasanian Babylonia," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 21, (1997): 103–117.

52 A. de Jong, "*A Quodam Persa Exstiterunt*. Re-Orienting Manichaean Origins," in *Empsychoi Logoi. Religious Innovations in Antiquity. Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst*, ed. A. Houtman, A. de Jong & M. Misset-van de Weg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008), 81–106, for the chain of prophets; and *idem*, The Peacock and the Evil One, in *From Daena to Din*, ed. C. Allison and A. Joisten-Pruschke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009) for the secondary deities.

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Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER 6

Egypt

Jacco Dieleman

1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the nature, functions, and perceptions of ritual and ritualists in pharaonic Egypt. Egyptian rituals can be understood as attempts to intervene in the natural course of events by mobilizing *heka* and so integrating the world of here and now into the cosmic domain of divine forces that once created and continue to govern the ordered world.[1] *Heka* is the Egyptian term for what was believed to be a primordial, natural force that the creator god applied in creating the ordered world and that continues to sustain the regeneration of the life-giving cycles of nature. Whereas deities use *heka* at their convenience, humans can harness and direct *heka* only through ritual.

Heka is of itself a morally neutral force; how it is utilized in ritual and how it affects the created world depends on the intentions of the ritualist.[2] One can exploit *heka* to protect, heal, harm, and even destroy, depending on how the ritual is executed. Even so, irrespective of its precise purpose and setting, an Egyptian ritual was always framed as assisting in the preservation of the ordered world. This is as true for the state cult as for rites performed in private settings at home or elsewhere. By means of the words recited, rituals were couched as addressing an urgent threat to the stability and proper workings of nature. The threat could be imagined as an external enemy, such as a demon or

1 The principles of Egyptian ritual are well explained in Jan Assmann, *Ägypten, Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1984), 58–63, 102–35, trans. David Lorton, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 47–52, 83–110. See also Assmann, *Tod und Jenseits im alten Ägypten* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2001), 453–62, trans. Lorton, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 349–55.

2 This issue has adequately been discussed by Robert Ritner in several publications. I refer the reader to: Ritner, "Egyptian Magic: Questions of Legitimacy, Religious Orthodoxy and Social Deviance," in *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths*, ed. Alan B. Lloyd, EES Occasional Publications 8 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1992), 189–200; Ritner, "The Religious, Social and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 43–60.

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hostile foreigner, but also as a physical or mental impairment, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, or death, that requires prompt repair.

Ritualists were viewed with respect and admiration for their skills, but also with suspicion. On the one hand, their rituals were believed to assist in the necessary regeneration of the cosmos and to overcome demons and diseases. State and society condoned such ritual behavior; in fact, it was expected of priests to perform precisely such rituals in the state cult and the private sphere. But on the other hand, curse rituals could target private individuals as easily as disease demons or enemies to the state. The notions of hostile *heka* and malevolent ritualists existed and informed people's behavior, as we can infer from such circumstantial evidence as inscribed amulets against "evil *heka*." Despite the existence of these mental categories, no text from ancient Egypt truly reflects on the moral implications of manipulating *heka*. By the same token, no normative or polemical discourse against deviant ritual is attested. No legislation against sorcery such as the Roman *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* has been preserved from ancient Egypt; it most likely never existed. No accusations against sorcerers are known and neither do tomb inscriptions ever explain untimely death as due to sorcery.[3]

It is only recently that Egyptology has come to terms with *heka*. In the past, *heka* has often been used to argue for the existence of a sphere of belief and practice, usually labelled 'magic,' that was separate from, or subordinate to, religion.[4] The present chapter advocates the view that *heka* does not allow for such distinction.

2 The Nature of *heka*

Any appreciation of the principles of Egyptian ritual depends on a proper understanding of the nature of *heka* (*ḥkꜣ*). *Heka* is the Egyptian term for the

3 For accusations against sorcery in the Greco-Roman world, see Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, Revealing Antiquity 10 (Cambridge, MA: 1997), 61–88 and Graf, "Untimely Death, Witchcraft, and Divine Vengeance. A Reasoned Epigraphical Catalog," *ZPE* 162 (2007): 139–50.

4 For critical assessments of how the notion 'magic' has been understood and applied in Egyptology, see Bernd-Christian Otto, "Zauberhaftes Ägypten—ägyptischer Zauber? Überlegungen zur Verwendung des Magiebegriffs in der Ägyptologie," in *Ägypten—Kindheit—Tod. Gedenkschrift für Edmund Hermsen*, ed. Florian Jeserich, (Vienna: De Grutyer, 2013), 39–70; Wilfried Gutekunst, "Wie 'magisch' ist die 'Magie' im alten Ägypten? Einige theoretische Bemerkungen zur Magie-Problematik," in *La magia in Egitto ai tempi dei faraoni*, ed. Alessandro Roccati and Alberto Siliotti (Verona: Böhlau Verlag, 1987), 77–98.

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creative force that makes the ordered world possible.[5] As vital energy it permeates the cosmos, enables the cycles of nature, and animates all that lives and grows from within. At the beginning of time, the demiurge used *heka* to create the ordered world and to make it function properly. In certain texts, *heka* is even called the *ka* (vital life force) or *ba* (physical manifestation) of the sun god himself, a way of saying that he embodies the force. The sun god has no monopoly on *heka*, though. All deities are in possession of this property as either residing in their belly or in their utterances. Since the moment of creation, or in proper Egyptian, since the First Occasion (*sp tpy*), the gods draw upon this force to regenerate creation or bring about at will a change in the course of events. Moreover, whenever a deviation occurs in nature, *heka* allows for reintegration into the regular cycles of the ordered world. *Heka* thus serves as a weapon to guard and preserve the order of the universe.

Associated with *heka* is the notion of *akhu* (*ꜣḫw*), a near synonym whose semantic root stresses the efficacious nature of *heka* when properly channeled and directed to a particular end.[6] It is most often used in reference to the verbal manifestation of *heka* and then best translated as "effective speech" or "spell."[7] In a popular incantation, attested from the Ramessid to the Hellenistic period, the two terms are juxtaposed, seemingly as related expressions for the property that imbues words with preternatural power. As the incantation states,

5 This section relies on the following excellent—and more detailed—descriptions of the nature of *heka*. Herman te Velde, The God Heka in Egyptian Theology, *JEOL* 21 (1970): 175–86; Robert Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 14–28; Thomas Schneider, "Die Waffe der Analogie. Altägyptische Magie als System," in *Das Analogiedenken. Vorstöße in ein neues Gebiet der Rationalitätstheorie*, ed. Karen Gloy and Manuel Bachmann (Freiburg; Munich: Verlag K. Alber, 2000), 37–85, 41–47.

6 The close correspondence of *heka* and *akhu* is also borne out by the fact that they could be used interchangeably. For example, in a spell to alleviate the effects of animal poison, two text witnesses (dating to 10–9th and 4th c. BCE) have *akhu*, where an earlier witness (Ramessid period, 12th–11th c. BCE) uses *heka*: "Horus killed it (= the poison) by means of his *heka*/*akhu*;" see the synoptic presentation in Alessandro Roccati, *Magica Taurinensia. Il grande papiro magico di Torino e i suoi duplicati* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011), 131, line 205. Similarly, *akhu* is substituted for *heka* in the vernacular version of the *Ceremony of Repelling the Evil One*, a curse ritual against the god Seth that is preserved in two 4th c. BCE manuscripts: Siegfried Schott, *Urkunden mythologischen Inhalts*, Urkunden VI (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1929–39), 103.5–6. For an attempt to define the semantic distinction between the two terms, see J.F. Borghouts, "Akhu and Hekau. Two Basic Notions of Ancient Egyptian Magic, and the Concept of the Divine Creative Word," in *La Magia in Egitto ai Tempi dei Faraoni*, ed. A. Roccati and A. Siliotti (Milan: Panini, 1987), 29–46.

7 On the meaning of *akhu*, see in particular, Ritner, *Mechanics*, 30–35, and Karl Jansen-Winkeln, "'Horizont' und 'Verklärtheit': Zur Bedeutung der Wurzel ꜣḫ," *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 23 (1996): 201–15.

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knowledge of such language is a privilege of the gods, transmitted from one generation to the next. It then specifies that *heka* and *akhu* operate on both the everyday and cosmic level: they offer protection against noxious animals, help preserve the ordered world of men and gods, and enable the sun god to realize successfully his daily cycle of rising and setting. It is framed as an address by Thoth, god of knowledge and writing, speaking to Horus-Shed, the god who cures those suffering from poison.

> I have recited with your *heka*; I have spoken with your *akhu*; I have conjured with your words—which your heart created. They are your conjurations (*ḥmwt-rꜣ*; "skillfully crafted speech") having come forth from your mouth, which your father Geb assigned to you, your mother Nut gave to you, and your brother Khenty-Khem taught you in order to create your protection (*zꜣ*); to renew your protection (*mkt*); to seal the mouth of any snake that is in the sky, on earth, and in the water; to make mankind live; to satisfy the gods; to transfigure Re with your hymns.[8]

Heka was not only a concept or property, but also regarded as a deity in its own right.[9] Most often he is depicted as an upright male with an emblem, the hieroglyphic sign for strength/power (*pḥty*), on his head.[10] His central role in the creation and preservation of life is well conveyed in vignettes in mortuary papyri that associate him with the sun god Re and with Osiris, the god of death and regeneration. He is then usually accompanied by the goddess Ma'at, the personification of cosmic and societal order. This iconography expresses that Heka is an indispensable force in the preservation of the continuous cycles of life-death-rebirth that govern nature. These processes rely on an uninterrupted

8 Metternich Stela [10], 106–115. This is an excerpt from the so-called 'Text A' of the Horus stelae. The earliest text witnesses are an ostracon from Deir el-Medina (oDeM 1680) and a papyrus (pVienna ÄEOS 3925), both dating to the Ramessid Period. The text is attested on Horus stelae from the Third Intermediate Period to the Hellenistic era. Edition of Metternich Stela (4th c. BCE): C.E. Sander-Hansen, *Die Texte der Metternichstele*, Analecta Aegyptiaca 7 (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1956).

9 For attestations and epithets, see Christian Leitz, ed., *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, vol. V, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 114 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 552a–556b.

10 For the range of variation in Heka's iconography, see Te Velde, "The God Heka," plates 26–32. The earliest preserved representation shows him as a mature, high-status human (mortuary temple of King Sahure at Abusir; Dynasty 5): John Baines, "On the Iconography of the God Heka and Old Kingdom Magic or Magicians," in *Parcourir l'éternité. Hommages à Jean Yoyotte*, ed. C. Zivie-Coche and I. Guermeur, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études 156 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 49–58.

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solar cycle and successful merging of Re and Osiris at night, which is all made possible through the intermediacy of Heka. In the subsequent nightly fight with the snake Apep, the archenemy of order, Heka paralyzes the enemy with his force and hence provides a safe passage for the sun god through the underworld.[11] The eternal unfolding (*neheh*, Re) of everlasting time (*djet*, Osiris), the two pillars of creation, is thus safeguarded by Heka.

Humans could also put *heka* to use when they felt the need in moments of crisis to interfere in the course of nature. In fact, according to a famous quote from a hymn to the sun god, it was he himself who gave humankind this ability when he created the world: "He made them *hekau* as a weapon to ward off the blow of events."[12] *Hekau* is here to be understood as "application or mobilization of *heka*", but is usually rendered in English as "magic."[13] The quote makes clear that *heka* is meant to be used in dealing with the vicissitudes of life, that is, as a protection from harm and a remedy for illness and misfortune. *Heka* was however not readily available to humans. Being intangible and divine in nature, it required special knowledge, skills, and effort to mobilize and control *heka*. It had to be procured through a ritual in which the current situation, which is felt to be endangered, inadequate or in need of repair, is identified with a similar episode in the mythical past. Under the influence of *heka*, the positive outcome of the mythical episode was supposed to be enforced upon, rather than transferred to, the current situation. The danger or defect would accordingly be overcome. In other words, *heka* enforces the reintegration of any deviation or anomaly back into the proper order of things.

Heka was captured and directed in ritual through the meaningful interplay of word, action, and implement in relation to the ritual's purpose. Each of these had an aspect of, or episode from, the mythological past as its referent. These referents have been aptly termed 'mythical precedents' by Jørgen Podemann Sørensen inasmuch as they function for the current situation

11 For the identification of Heka with the "Eldest Magician" in the seventh hour of the Amduat, see Ritner, *Mechanics*, 19, fn. 77. In the Book of Gates, Heka accompanies the sun god throughout the night.

12 Merikare, 136–37. The quote is taken from the Teaching for King Merikare; for text publication, see Joachim Friedrich Quack, *Studien zur Lehre für Merikare*, Göttinger Orientforschungen IV.23 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992). Text witnesses date to the New Kingdom.

13 Egyptologists justify this translation on the ground that Greek *mageia* was translated into Coptic *hik*, the later form of earlier *heka*; Ritner, *Mechanics*, 14 and Schneider, "Waffe der Analogie," 42, fn. 19—but see also Otto, "Zauberhaftes Ägypten—ägyptischer Zauber?," 63–70.

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as stringent guidelines that determine the outcome.[14] Following Thomas Schneider's typology, six possible analogical relationships between this and the other world were set up in the ritual:[15]

1. the analogy of the actor (*Aktant*); e.g. the ritualist is identified with a deity
2. the analogy of the recipient (*Zielobjekt*); e.g. the patient is identified with a deity
3. the analogy of the action (*Handlung*); e.g. the ritual procedure or part thereof is identified with an episode of the mythical past
4. the analogy of the speech act (*Sprechakt*); e.g. the incantation is presented as once having been spoken or written down by a deity
5. the analogy of the designation (*Bezeichnung*); e.g. the word for an object used in the ritual is phonetically related to a word with mythological associations
6. the analogy of the implement (*Hilfsmittel*); e.g. an object used in the ritual is identified with an object once used in a mythical episode

The principle can be seen at work in the following spell that aims at protecting the client from an attack of an angry, roaming spirit of a deceased who was refused entry into the afterlife or not provided with a proper burial.

[title] Another ⟨incantation⟩:

[incantation] The protection ⟨of the head⟩ of NN, born of NN, is the protection of He-who-awakens-soundly, ⟨i.e.⟩ Atum, the father of the gods. The protection of the left temple is the protection of Atum. The protection of his right eye is the protection of this eye of Atum, which repels obscurity after darkness. The protection of his left eye is ⟨the protection of⟩ this eye of Horus which drives back the New Moon. The protection of his ⟨right⟩ nostril is the protection of these two nose wings of Thoth from which maʿat comes forth for the gods. The protection of his left nostril is the protection of this nostril of Naunet. [*the list continues a capite ad calcem*] His two feet are the foot soles of Shu as he crosses the lake, as he traverses

14 Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, "The Argument in Ancient Egyptian Magical Formulae," *Acta Orientalia* 45 (1984): 5–19, see 8.

15 Schneider's revised typology is now to be preferred over Podemann Sørensen's classification of what he calls 'magical arguments' (see former footnote) for its greater clarity and logical coherence; Schneider, "Waffe der Analogie," 40 and 60–75.

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the sea. No limb of his is without a god who will put his seal on what he found, while the amulets of Iunu (i.e. Heliopolis) are held tight in his hand.

[directions for use] Words to be said over balls of clay; a man's limbs are to be enchanted for his ailment by saying this incantation ⟨against⟩ a female dead who robs as a wailing-woman(?). To be wiped four times therewith. To be placed under the head of a man—and no male or female dead can pursue him.[16]

The ritual consists of preparing balls of clay, which are identified in the incantation with the "amulets of Iunu," turning the mundane clay balls through the analogy of the implement into powerful amulets that exist and function outside the present, inadequate world. The ritualist is then to wipe them, as I assume, over the client's body so as to infuse all his limbs with the protective power of these "amulets of Iunu." By means of the incantation, each limb of his is de-humanized and transfigured into the limb of a deity and associated with a function that is essential to the preservation of the life-giving cycles of nature (analogy of the recipient).[17] The mundane and deficient situation is thus reintegrated into the ordered world and will from this moment on again follow the stringent laws of creation. This is not a matter of convincing or compelling the gods to comply with the ritualist's requests; it is a matter of reestablishing the primacy of the physical laws of nature that were instituted by divine command at the First Occasion.

3 The Complementarity of Temple and Private Ritual

The created world was not considered a stable and static situation, but a dynamic process that is continuously in flux and in the process of regeneration, as manifested in the cycles of nature. These processes of regeneration were believed to be complex in nature and ever at risk of disorder or even total

16 P. Leiden I 348 ro. 4/10–6/4. The manuscript dates to the Ramessid period. Text edition: J.F. Borghouts, *The Magical Texts of Papyrus Leiden I 348* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971) 19–20 [no. 12]; see also Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert, *Altägyptische Zaubersprüche* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005) 36–37 [no. 4].

17 For the common technique of 'Gliedervergottung,' see Terence DuQuesne, "La déification des parties du corps. Correspondances magiques et identification avec les dieux dans l'Égypte ancienne," in *La magie en Égypte: à la recherché d'une definition*, ed. Yvan Koenig (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2002), 237–71.

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collapse. It was therefore deemed necessary, from the perspective of the state and society, to assist in these processes through the performance of ritual and even to intervene when the ordered world was disturbed. The king bore the responsibility to perform those rituals that work towards the preservation of nature, the state, and society in general. In reality, these rituals were performed by priests on behalf of the king in temples throughout the country. The general population was not allowed to actively participate in these rituals, which were for the most part performed hidden from their view. Five ideal types with the following function can be recognized:[18]

1. to provide for the gods
2. to protect the temple building from impurity and demonic intrusion
3. to protect the king from harm
4. to destroy by proxy real and potential enemies to cosmos and state
5. to assist in the processes of regeneration (sun god, Osiris, sacred animal, child deity, king)

Rituals performed in the private sphere were typologically similar, yet more limited in scope and smaller in scale and expense. They were concerned with the health and well-being of the household and its individual members only. Any illness or defect, no matter how insignificant at first sight, was considered an aberration and posed a general threat to the balance of nature. In principle, therefore, such rituals were as indispensable as state rituals to maintaining the balance in nature. Private rituals aimed at the following results, which are in essence equivalent to those of state ritual:

1*. to provide for the spirits of deceased family members
2*. to protect the house and household
3*. to protect the body and well-being of its individual members
4*. to heal ailments and diseases
5*. to reintegrate the deceased into the cycles of life as an *akh* spirit

Rituals performed in the temples and those performed at home were both attempts to mobilize and channel *heka* by means of the analogy framework described above. Except for their scope and location of performance, state and private rituals were intrinsically the same as regards the principles of operation, conceptual framework, and general objectives.[19]

18 For a survey of the various types of temple ritual, see Joachim F. Quack, "La magie au temple," in *La magie en Égypte*, 41–68; note that the article excludes rituals concerned with the statue cult such as sacrifice and animation, which are included here under #1.

19 This principle is further illustrated with pertinent examples in Panagiotis I.M. Kousoulis, "The Function of *ḥkꜣ* as a Mobilized Form in a Theological Environment: the Apotropaic 'Ritual of Overthrowing Apophis'," in *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2003), 362–71.

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Our evidence indicates that private rituals were performed by temple priests when off-duty from temple service.[20] In their capacity as ritual specialists and experts in the world of the divine, these priests mediated between the ritual concerns of the state and the need for healing and protection in the daily lives of private individuals. According to the Book of the Temple, a treatise on the ideal temple and its personnel, lector priests (*ḫry-ḥb*) were responsible for funerary rites, scribes of the divine book (*sš mḏꜣt-nṯr*) for curse rites, Sakhmet priests (*wʿb Sḫmt*) for hygiene, and scorpion conjurors (*ḫrp Srḳt*) for healing and protection.[21] The scholarly distinction between state and private is therefore arbitrary to a certain degree in the study of Egyptian ritual.[22] As concerns the present article, it is important to realize that private ritual was not perceived in opposition to state ritual as an ambiguous, unsanctioned, or even deviant type of ritual per se. The arbitrariness of the divide is well borne out by the many examples of ritual texts adapted for use to benefit a deity or the king in one case and a private individual, either deceased or still alive on earth, in another.[23]

The boundaries between state and private ritual are further blurred in the collections of ritual texts found as burial deposits in private tombs.[24] Several of these private 'libraries' include copies of liturgical texts used in the state cult besides formularies for private healing and protection as well as literary texts. The most instructive case is the so-called Ramesseum Library of the

20 This is well explained in Ritner, *Mechanics*, 220–33. Note that there is evidence for the possession and sharing of formulas for healing rites among scribes in Western Thebes in the late New Kingdom: Papyrus Geneva MAH 15274 verso 2.1–6 and Papyrus BM EA 75025. For text publications, see respectively, Adhémar Massart, "The Egyptian Geneva Papyrus MAH 15274," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts abteilung Kairo* 15 (1957): 172–85, 182 and Robert J. Demarée, *The Bankes Late Ramesside Papyri*, British Museum Research Publications 155 (London: British Museum, 2006), 26b–28a.

21 The Book of the Temple is preserved in multiple manuscripts dating to the Roman Period. Its publication is in preparation by Joachim F. Quack; see, "Das Buch vom Tempel und verwandte Texte: ein Vorbericht," *ARG* 2 (2000): 1–20. For the priestly titles and duties, see Quack, "La magie au temple," 44–46; Religious Personnel, in: Sarah Iles Johnston (ed.) *Religions of the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 288–92. A useful summary of the various titles and duties is given in Christopher Theiss, *Magie und Raum. Der magische Schutz ausgewählter Räume im alten Ägypten nebst einem Vergleich zu angrenzenden Kulturbereichen*, Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 40–59.

22 The perceived validity of this distinction is effectively deconstructed in Ritner, *Mechanics*, 183–90.

23 For pertinent examples, see Quack, "La magie au temple" and Ritner, *Mechanics*, 13 and 183–90.

24 For a survey of such collections, see Stephen Quirke, *Egyptian Literature 1800 BC: Questions and Readings* (London: Golden House Publications, 2004), 14–23.

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late Middle Kingdom, which is named after the New Kingdom temple under which a much older private tomb containing this collection of manuscripts was found together with writing equipment and small objects of ritual power.[25] The owner of the tomb remains anonymous, but judging from the materials found in his tomb he worked as a professional ritualist. His 'library' includes copies of the Coronation Ritual of king Senwosret I, of cult hymns addressed to the god Sobek, and of a funerary liturgy next to formularies for private healing and protection and literary texts such as the Tale of Sinuhe and the Eloquent Peasant. In all likelihood, this individual served a variety of functions as lector priest (*ḫry-ḥb*) inside and outside the institutional confines of the temple. He functioned in a local temple cult, performed private burial ceremonies, and, as a local ritual specialist, offered rites of healing and protection to the members of his immediate community.[26]

4 *Heka* as a Hostile Force

As a force with the ability to change the course of nature, *heka* is at heart an ambiguous factor in the created world. As much as it contributes to the maintenance and repair of the balance of nature, it can also operate to the detriment of creation when it is marshaled by agents of destruction. Such agents are the snake Apep, which functions as the archenemy of creation, and demons, which bring diseases and misfortune into the world, as well as humans who mobilize *heka* to harm others. From the perspective of state and society, such *heka* is marked as evil (*ḥkꜣ ḏw*, *ḥkꜣ bỉn*, or *ḥkꜣ* written with evil determinative, i.e. a stick, which is the hieratic variant of the hieroglyph representing a bound or slain enemy).[27] Their effect is broken through the performance of counter-rituals as stated in the introduction to the execration ritual for the Preservation of Life in

25 The official excavation report is J.E. Quibell, *The Ramesseum*, Egyptian Research Account 2 (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1898), 1–21, plates 1–30A. For the most comprehensive description of the tomb and its contents, see R.B. Parkinson, *Reading Ancient Egyptian Poetry; among other Histories* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 138–60. See also Roger Forshaw, "The Role of the Lector in Ancient Egyptian Society," Archaeopress Egyptology 5 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2014) 30–46; J.F. Quack, "Zur Lesung und Deutung des dramatischen Ramesseumpapyrus," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 133 (2006): 72–89, 72–77; Ludwig D. Morenz, *Beiträge zur Schriftlichkeitskultur im Mittleren Reich und in der zweiten Zwischenzeit*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 29 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 144–47; Ritner, *Mechanics*, 223–32.

26 The various interpretations of this individual's social and professional status offered over the years are briefly surveyed in Quack, "Zur Lesung und Deutung," 76–77.

27 For spellings and references, see Yvan Koenig, "Le contre-envôutement de Ta-i.di-Imn. Pap. Deir el-Médineh 44," *BIFAO* 99 (1999): 259–81, 264 *fn.* m. See also Ritner, *Mechanics*, 21.

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Egypt: "⟨This is⟩ a secret document that overturns *hekau*, binds conjurations (*ṯzwt*, literally, a well-wrought verse), halts conjurations, and subjugates the entire universe."[28] In this case, the *hekau* mentioned is obviously not viewed as a beneficent force, but as a hostile type that works against creation and whose effect must be neutralized.

In the private sphere, evil *heka* was regarded a real-life threat as the existence of several healing recipes against the influence of *heka* in the belly[29] and amulets to protect from *heka* attest. It follows from these sources that evil *heka* was understood in terms of demonic intrusion, which enters (*ḫḳ*), attacks (*ỉy r*), or falls upon (*ỉy r ḥꜣy*) the victim. An amulet inscribed for a woman from Deir el-Medineh identifies the demon as "evil *heka*" and addresses him as "enemy." The ritualist identifies with the deities Mehet-weret, Seth, and Horus and accuses the demon of having divulged sacred knowledge.

> Halt, you enemy, retreat! Where are you? I know that you know the name, that you know my name[30]—but you are dead. I am Mehet-Weret, mistress of *hekau*; I am Seth, great of strength, I am Horus, great of terror, the overseer of secrets of the Ennead. My name is against you. You will not fall upon (her) side by night, by day, at any moment, because you have spoken about the chest of acacia wood which is under (the supervision of) Horus lord of Sekhem: "the fist, the eyes, and the head of Osiris (are in it)." O it is not me who said it. It is not me who repeated it. It is the evil *heka* which comes to fall upon Ta-di-Amun who said it. It is he who repeated it. Halt, you enemy, retreat! Where are you?[31]

28 P. Salt 825 5/10–6/1. The manuscript dates to the latter half of the 26th dynasty (6th c. BCE). Text edition: Philippe Derchain, *Le Papyrus Salt 825* (*B.M. 10051*). *Rituel pour la conservation de la vie en Égypte* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1965) and François-René Herbin, "Les premières pages du Papyrus Salt 825," *BIFAO* 88 (1988): 95–112.

29 These recipes are Ebers 165–68 and Hearst 36 and 54. For edition and commentary, see Hildegard von Deines, Herman Grapow, and Wolfhart Westendorf, *Grundriss der Medizin der Alten Ägypter*, vols. IV and V (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958). The editors of the *Grundriss der Medizin* misidentified *ḥmwt-sꜣ* as "witchcraft" (mentioned in Ebers 733 and Hearst 159) and Ritner as "the craft of amulets" (*Mechanics*, 53 and *fn.* 246). It is in fact the name of a type of skin disease: Joachim F. Quack, "Tabuisierte und ausgegrenzte Kranke nach dem 'Buch vom Tempel'," in *Papyrus Ebers und die antike Heilkunde*, ed. Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert, Philippika, Marburger altertumskundliche Abhandlungen 7 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 63–80, 71–76.

30 I read *twỉ rḫ rḫ=k rn rḫ=k rn=y*; Koenig translates "je connais, je connais le nom, tu connais mon nom"; Koenig, "Le contre-envôutement de Ta-i.di-Imn," 261.

31 P. Deir el-Medineh 44 14–19. The manuscript dates to the Ramessid period. For text edition, see Koenig, "Le contre-envôutement de Ta-i.di-Imn."

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In a prescription against night terrors, the demon is exhorted to leave the patient alone; *heka* is listed as one of its attributes.

> A document of repelling fear which comes to fall upon a man at night. Turn around when you lift up your face and your ba, your shapes, your body, your *heka* and your shapes, your forms, O male and female spirit, male and female dead, male and female opponent in the sky and upon earth.[32]

5 Hostile Ritualists (*heka*-Workers)

Another source of concern was the possibility that ritualists would use their expertise of mobilizing *heka* to cast spells against other individuals. In the Book of the Heavenly Cow, the sun god himself warns against the knowledge and skills of *heka*-workers: "Beware of ritualists (*ḥkꜣyw*) who know their spells (*ꜣḫw*), because Heka himself is in them."[33] Such individuals feature as possible threats to a person's health and well-being in the so-called Oracular Amuletic Decrees. These textual amulets, which were worn folded into a tube and hung on a string around the neck, claim to record the words of a deity promising protection against all possible dangers and misfortune that can befall a man.[34] The texts are highly formulaic in nature and address the same themes with little variation, including the category of *heka*-workers, as for example,

> We will keep her safe from any *hekau* of any male ritualist (*ḥkꜣw ḥꜣwty*) and any female ritualist (*ḥkꜣw sḥmt*); we will not let them have any ritual power (*ꜣḫ*) over her.[35]

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32 P. Leiden I 348 vso 2/1–3, no. 36. The manuscript dates to the Ramessid period. For text edition, see J.F. Borghouts, *The Magical Texts of Papyrus Leiden I 348* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971) 32–33.

33 Book of the Heavenly Cow, 218–19. The text witnesses date to the New Kingdom (Tutankhamen to Ramesses VI). For text edition, see Erik Hornung, *Der ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh. Eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 46, 2nd ed. (Freiburg; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991). For an English translation by E.F. Wente, see William Kelly Simpson ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 289–98.

34 All specimens date to the Third Intermediate Period. For the publication of these texts, see I.E.S. Edwards, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum. Fourth Series. Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1960); the passages quoted come from documents T.2 and P.3.

35 P. Turin 1984 ro. 94–97 (T.2).

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> We will keep her safe from *hekau* of Syria, from *hekau* of Kush, from *hekau* of Nubia, from *hekau* of Libya, from *hekau* of an Egyptian, from *hekau* of a physician.[36]

These two passages, which are representative for the whole corpus, give little if any information about the identity, professional background, and social status of these individuals, whose dealings were apparently a great cause of concern. The first passage subdivides the category into male and female practitioners. This gender distinction conforms to the common scribal method of distinguishing between male and female in listings of dangerous beings in apotropaic texts, as in the following incantation to be inscribed on a strip of papyrus in preparation of an amulet for the king:

> Stop male opponent, female opponent, sow, *ḫ-ḏ-r-t*, devourer of the West, any fear, any attack of a male dog, female dog, male dead, female dead, male opponent, female opponent, male enemy, female enemy, who will come to attack pharaoh at night, during the day, at any moment of the day.[37]

The second passage subdivides the category further by region. The foreign territories listed are general designations of regions neighboring Egypt to the north, south and west. These regions were traditionally viewed as areas of disorder that posed a perpetual threat to the political and societal stability of Egypt. The listing is therefore a reiteration of standard Egyptian cultural geography, which is informed by ideological and political considerations, not by a genuine interest in, and recognition of, the plurality of ritual practices across regions. Like the gender distinction, this listing follows a scribal format and is not a faithful expression of contemporary lived reality. We must not infer from the passage that Syrian, Nubian, and Libyan ritualists were a common sight in Egyptian towns and villages and that they offered their services as itinerant ritualists to whoever needed help in resolving interpersonal conflict. Without corroborating evidence, the presence of such individuals in Egyptian society cannot be assumed.

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36 P. Louvre E.25354 ro. 2–9 (P.3).

37 P. Brooklyn 47.218.156 4/1–2. The manuscript dates to the latter half of the 26th dynasty (6th c. BCE). For text edition, see Serge Sauneron, *Le papyrus magique illustré de Brooklyn* [*Brooklyn Museum 47.218.156*], Wilbour Monographs 3 (Brooklyn, NY: The Brooklyn Museum, 1970).

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Notwithstanding, fear for the machinations of imagined foreign wizards and witches was real and informed people's thoughts and behavior. For instance, in a personal address to his viceroy, King Amenhotep II (ca. 1425–1399 BCE) gave the following advice: "Do not be indulgent in the least to Nubian⟨s⟩; beware of their people and their *heka*-workers!"[38] One of the Oracular Amuletic Decrees promises to keep its wearer safe from a Syrian woman (*ḫꜣrw.yt*) and a Nubian woman (*nḥs.yt*).[39] How and why these women would inflict harm on the wearer of the amulet is left unexplained, but their casual inclusion in the long list of agents of misfortune points to the existence of a popular stereotype that associated wickedness and occult power with foreign women. The same belief may underlie an exorcism formula in a spell to heal a child. The ailment is conceived as an intruder and accordingly ordered to leave the child's body through its bodily fluids. The intruder is identified as an Asiatic or Nubian woman, who, as is explicitly stated, hails from beyond the desert borders that confine and protect the well-ordered world of Egypt.

> Flow out, O you Asiatic woman (*ꜥꜣm.t*), who came from the hill country, O you Nubian woman (*nḥs.yt*), who came from the desert! Are you a slave woman? Come (out) as ⟨his⟩ vomit. Are you a noble woman? Come as his urine. Come as the mucus of his nose. Come as the sweat of his limbs. My hands are upon this child—the hands of Isis are upon him in the same way as she put her hands on her son Horus.[40]

These stereotypes fed into the literary imagination and were exploited for constructing captivating narrative plots.[41] For instance, in the Demotic *Adventures of Setne Khamwas and his son Si-Osire* (Setne II), a Nubian sorcerer returns after 1500 years to challenge Egypt one more time in a magic contest—if only to be defeated by the superior powers of his Egyptian rival, the precocious Si-Osire.[42] The intended audience's fear for the skills of foreign wizards

38 Urk. IV, 1344, 11–12. The letter is inscribed on stela MFA Boston 25.632 (Urk. IV, 1343–44).

39 L2 verso 6–7.

40 P. Berlin P 3027: D 2, 7–10. The manuscript dates to about 1600 BCE. Text edition: Naoko Yamazaki, *Zaubersprüche für Mutter und Kind: Papyrus Berlin 3027*, Achet 2 (Berlin: Verlag der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003).

41 On the representation of ritual experts in Egyptian fictional literature, see Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites. The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)* RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005) 222–38; Alan B. Lloyd, "Heka, Dreams, and Prophecy in Ancient Egyptian Stories," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Magic, Dreams and Prophecy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Kasia Szpakowska (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 71–94.

42 The text is preserved in a single manuscript dating to the 1st c. CE: pBM EA 10822 vso (formerly 604 vso). Translation by Robert Ritner, in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: an*

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is evidently what motivates the plot development. Moreover, what casts the Nubian sorcerer as the villain are his malevolent and transgressive behavior and his outsider status as a foreigner, not the occult powers that he employs. Like the hero Si-Osire, he manipulates *heka* (*ḥḳ* in Demotic). Nowhere in the text are his powers dismissed as intrinsically evil, demonic, or fraudulent.

Such fears depend of course on a genuine belief in the efficacious power of foreign ritual. It is for this very reason that some handbooks for healing and protection prescribe incantations in foreign languages. For example, the London Medical Papyrus includes a series of seven incantations against skin conditions, six of which are in a Northwest Semitic language,[43] while one is explicitly labelled as in the Cretan tongue.[44]

> Conjuration of the Asiatic disease[45] in the speech of Crete (*Keftiu*): s-n-t-k-p-p-wy-i-y-m-n-t-r-k-k-r.[46] This incantation is to be spoken over fermented barm(?), urine, *šbt*. To be applied to it.[47]

Names and incantations in Nubian languages were likewise exploited for their presumed power.[48]

Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry, ed. William Kelly Simpson, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 470–489. See also the story of Horus-Pawenesh, which is partly preserved in three Demotic manuscripts (Roman period) and an Aramaic translation (Achaemenid period): Karl-Th. Zauzich, "Neue literarische Texte in demotischer Schrift" *Enchoria* 8.2 (1978): 33–38, 36; Bezalel Porten, "The Prophecy of Hor bar Punesh and the Demise of Righteousness: An Aramaic Papyrus in the British Library," in *Res severa verum gaudium*, ed. F. Hoffmann and H.-J. Thissen, Studia Demotica 6 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 427–66.

43 Richard C. Steiner, "Northwest Semitic Incantations in an Egyptian Medical Papyrus of the Fourteenth Century B.C.E.," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51 (1992): 191–200.

44 The manuscript dates to the latter part of the 18th dynasty. Text edition: Christian Leitz, *Magical and Medical Papyri of the New Kingdom*, Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum VII (London: British Museum, 1999), 51–84.

45 The 'Asiatic disease' is most likely leprosy: Thierry Bardinet, "Remarques sur les maladies de la peau, la lèpre, et le châtiment divin dans l'Égypte ancienne." *Revue d'égyptologie* 39 (1988): 3–36.

46 On the possible translation of the Cretan incantation, see most recently Peter W. Haider, "Minoische Sprachdenkmäler in einem ägyptischen Papyrus medizinische Inhalts," in *Das Ägyptische und die Sprachen Vorderasiens, Nordafrikas und der Ägäis*, ed. Thomas Schneider (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004), 411–22.

47 pBM EA 10059 (London Medical Papyrus): 7, 4–6 = incantation 20.

48 Yvan Koenig, "la Nubie dans les textes magiques," *Revue d'égyptologie* 38 (1987): 105–110; Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 139–43; Annik Wüthrich, "Abracadabras méroïtiques dans le Livre des Morts?," in *Ausgestattet mit den Schriften des Thot: Festschrift für Irmtraut Munro zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Burkhard Backes, Marcus Müller-Roth,

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The formulaic format of the two passages from the oracular amuletic decrees quoted above reveals that ritualists who harnessed *heka* to harm others were considered agents of disorder without any further specifications and judged on a par with such elusive categories as demons and foreigners. What such individuals were believed to be capable of doing is explained in a passage from an incantation that was to be recited as part of a private rite of purification. This ritual, the directions for which are preserved in a formulary of the thirteenth century BCE, aims at acquiring protection for the client against any behavior or rituals that would be detrimental to the client's health and well-being. The formulaic list of potential culprits is reminiscent of the oracular amuletic decrees, as it includes foreigners from the four corners of the world and ritualists, again subdivided into male and female. The incantation opens as follows:

> O Lord of Millions, whose name is unknown; O all gods of the sky, come so that NN born of NN may be purified of everything done against him on this day, this night, this month, <this> hour, this year and that the evil that is upon him will be removed and that will not happen what is done against him by any man, patrician, commoner, sun-folk, foreigner from southern, northern, western, and eastern lands, male ritualist (*ḥkꜣw*), female ritualist (*ḥkꜣyt*), who hold evil intentions against NN born of NN and act against him so as to render him to a god or goddess and to make him eat what he abhors and to exorcise[49] his heart in his body.[50]

It follows from the passage that ritualists were feared for their ability to acquire control over a person's will and wits. They were believed to have the skills to manipulate *heka* so as to direct the anger of a deity against an innocent victim (render him to a god), to confound a person such that he would make judgments against his nature (eat what he abhors), and even to take over wholly a person's individuality and senses (exorcise his heart). Similar fears may underlie the concern expressed in an ostracon about the theft of a statuette of the

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and Simone Stöhr, Studien zum altägyptischen Totenbuch 14 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 267–282.

49 For the verb *swthꜣ*, see Ritner, *Mechanics*, 193, *fn.* 890.

50 P. Chester Beatty IX vso B12/1–5. The manuscript dates to the Ramessid period. For text edition, see Alan H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum. Third Series. Chester Beatty Gift* (London: The British Museum, 1935), 110–13.

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goddess Taweret.[51] The writer fears that the thief may now use the statuette against him: "it may work a manifestation (*bꜣw*) of (the god) Seth against me."[52]

6 Curse Rituals

There is ample evidence that priests regularly performed curse rituals in ancient Egypt. Large numbers of ritually manipulated and intentionally broken vessels and figurines, often inscribed with curse texts, have been recovered throughout Egypt. These materials are the physical remains of rituals that aimed at targeting and incapacitating by proxy inauspicious forces, be they human beings, social groups, dangerous dead, demons, deities, or even malicious thought and slander.[53] The manipulated object stands in for the target, which is cast in the role of 'the enemy' and identified by reciting an incantation or also by inscribing its name on the object. The object is then destroyed by a combination of binding, trampling, smashing, burning and burying, so as to transfer the properties of subjugation and destruction from the object to the target named. These execration rituals likely developed early on out of the 'ritual of breaking the red pots,' a closing rite to the offering ritual.[54] In this ritual, the vessels and dishes used in the offering ritual were deliberately destroyed to prevent reuse. It was enacted as a curse rite in which the dishes were symbolically identified with evil to be overcome.

Most of the recovered materials were produced and put to use in the service of the state. Anyone or anything perceived as a threat to the order, stability and integrity of the nation was a target. As a form of pre-emptive warfare, the state used these rituals as a means to maintain its hegemony over foreign

51 Ostracon Deir el-Medina 251: J.F. Borghouts, "Divine Intervention in Ancient Egypt and its Manifestation (*bꜣw*)," in *Gleanings from Deir el-Medîna*, ed. R.J. Demarée and J.J. Janssen, Egyptologische Uitgaven 1 (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1982), 1–70, 15–19. The ostracon dates to the Ramessid period.

52 O. DeM 251, 3–4.

53 For excellent overviews of the subject, see Ritner, *Mechanics*, 111–80; Koenig, *Magie et magiciens*, 131–85; Theiss, *Magie und Raum*, 64–87.

54 J. van Dijk, "Zerbrechen der roten Töpfe," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* VI (1986): 1389–96; Jan Assmann, "Spruch 23 der Pyramidentexte und die Ächtung der Feinde Pharaos," in *Hommages à Jean Leclant. Volume 1: Études pharaoniques*, Bibliothéque d'Étude 106.1 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1994), 45–59, esp. 50–55. Vera Müller, "Bestand und Deutung der Opferdepots bei Tempeln, in Wohnhausbereichen und Gräbern der zweiten Zwischenzeit in Tell el-Da'ba," in *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture in the Egyptian Old and Middle Kingdoms*, ed. Harco Willems, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 103 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 175–204.

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populations across its borders as well as over political opponents and criminals within its borders. A section from the priestly handbook Papyrus Jumilhac describes in vivid terms how the integrity of Egypt as a territorial state and ordered society was believed to depend upon the regular performance of such rituals.[55]

> If one does not decapitate the enemy in one's presence—either ⟨modeled⟩ out of wax, ⟨drawn on⟩ a blank sheet of papyrus or ⟨made of⟩ acacia or *hema* wood—in accordance with the rites of the divine words (= any kind of ritual handbook), the foreign countries will revolt against Egypt and war and rebellion will occur in the entire country. One will not listen to pharaoh in his palace and this land will be without defenders. Therefore, open the papyrus scrolls, consult the divine words and you will be skilled, following the designs of the gods![56]

The passage prescribes the use of wax, papyrus and wood. Such materials have not been preserved, as they were fully destroyed in the course of the rituals. By contrast, inscribed red-washed clay vessels and molded and sculpted bound-prisoner figurines have been recovered, often in assemblages in considerable numbers, from sites as far south as Mirgissa in Nubia to Tell Defneh in the north-eastern Delta, dating from as early as the Early Dynastic period.[57] Temple inscriptions indicate that priests continued to curse state enemies well into the Roman period.[58]

The Middle Kingdom materials are inscribed with a standard curse formula, termed today 'the rebellion formula,' which lists Egypt's potential enemies in a fixed order: first chieftains from Nubia, the Levant, and Libya, then Egyptians (social groups and dead individuals) and general inauspicious behavior. Each section follows the same format, as illustrated here with the section on Nubia.

> The ruler of Kush, Auau, born of […], and all the stricken ones who are with him. The ruler of Saï, Seteqtenkekh, and all the stricken ones

55 The manuscript dates to the Hellenistic period. Text edition, see Jacques Vandier, *Le papyrus Jumilhac* (Paris: CNRS, 1961).

56 P. Jumilhac 18/9–12.

57 The relevant materials are listed by period and with references in Theiss, *Magie und Raum*, 708–31.

58 M. Alliot, "Les rites de la chasse au filet, aux temples de Karnak, d'Edfou et d'Esneh," *Revue d'égyptologie* 5 (1946): 57–118, 61f. Serge Sauneron, *Les fêtes réligieuses d'Esna aux derniers siècles du paganisme* [*Esna V*] (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1962) 25, note b (= Esna 199.27–28).

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> who are with him. The ruler of Webasepet, Bakuayt, called Tchay, born of Ihaas, born to Wenkat, and all the stricken ones who are with him. [*several more individuals are identified this way*] Their strong men, their messengers, their confederates, their allies, who will rebel, who will plot, who will fight, who will say that they will fight, who will say that they will rebel, in this entire land.[59]

The names of the individuals and toponyms were frequently updated so as to reflect contemporary conditions.[60] Such a high degree of standardization and concern for accurate intelligence indicate that a central authority directed the performance of these rituals and that they were measures for general defense rather than specific crisis situations.

The state also relied on execration in defense of cosmic order.[61] In the temple cult, similar execration techniques were applied to overcome the threat of non-existence and chaos posed by Apep, the archenemy of the sun god, and Seth, the opponent of Osiris and Horus. Evidence for such temple ceremonies generally dates to the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, in the form of liturgical manuals and ritual scenes on temple walls, but the institution was already in existence as early as the Middle Kingdom.[62] The instructions to these rites prescribe the fabrication and ritual destruction of wax figurines, clay balls, and drawings on sheets of papyrus as well as the mutilation and killing of cattle, fowl, and fish. In one handbook, a note explicates that the rite has the ability to not only attack the cosmic enemies of Osiris but also the real-life enemies of the person reciting.

> When this incantation is recited against all enemies of (the Osiris of) NN, evil will happen to him (i.e. the enemy) for seven days. It is a truly great (rite of) protection. It is beneficent for Osiris and beneficent for him who recites it. He will not encounter any evil obstruction.[63]

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59 Translation: Robert Ritner, "Execration Texts (1.32), in *The Context of Scripture. Vol. I: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 50–52. The translation follows the Berlin bowls, supplemented by parallels from the Mirgissa materials. For further translations, see Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, 11–12 [no. 12]; Fischer-Elfert, *Altägyptische Zauberspruche*, 79–81 [no. 60].

60 Theiss, *Magie und Raum*, 78–87.

61 Quack, "Magie dans le temple"; Ritner, *Mechanics*, 207–12.

62 Ritner, *Mechanics*, 211, fns. 976 and 977; Kousoulis, "The Function of *ḥkꜣ*."

63 Urk VI, 61.17–21. The two text witnesses date to the 4th c. BCE. Text edition: Schott, *Urkunden mythologischen Inhalts*.

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In other words, such rites of execration could easily be adapted for use outside the strict domains of temple cult and state defense.

It is precisely such a handbook that was used in the so-called Harem Conspiracy, a plot to kill king Ramses III and secure the throne for Pentaweret, son of a queen Tiye.[64] According to the preserved records, the conspirators made use of written spells (*sšw n ḥkꜣw*), inscribed wax figurines (*nṯrw n mnḫt*) and potions (*pḫrwt*)[65] to incapacitate the palace guard and to execrate the king himself (*twtw n nbʿwˢ*, "figurines of the lord[lph]").[66] They knew how to do this, as priests had provided them with a liturgical manual "to inspire terror and respect" (*sš n dỉt nrw šfyt*) from the king's own library.[67] Such manuals were used for protecting the king through execration rituals, but instead of cursing the king's enemies, the conspirators chose the king himself as the object of execration. The intended beneficiary had thus become the victim. It was this reversal, the intention of targeting the king that led to capital punishment, not the performance of the ritual per se.

In private life, such techniques and materials were used in rites of healing and protection to target and defeat animals, demons and wandering dead that were believed to bring disease and misfortune. The instructions for such rites are preserved in multiple formularies and a large variety of ritual objects produced for such purposes have been excavated.[68] The use of an

64 For further analysis, see Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 108–20 and Ritner, *Mechanics*, 192–99.

65 This word is often read *rmṯw* ("men"), which is based on an incorrect transcription by Willem Pleyte in 1868; corrected in Ritner, *Mechanics*, 54, fn. 250.

66 P. Rollin line 1 (= KRI V, 362.1) and P. Rifaud F line 3. The preserved records, which originally may have formed one long document, are the Judicial Papyrus of Turin, Papyrus Rollin, Papyrus Lee 1 and 2, Papyrus Rifaud A, B, C E, and F. They are collected in KRI V, 350–66; for Papyrus Rifaud E and F, see Yvan Koenig, "Nouveaux textes Rifaud II (document E)," *Cahier de recherches de l'Institut de papyrologie et d'égyptologie de Lille* 11 (1989) 53–58 and Koenig, "À propos de la conspiration du harem, *BIFAO* 101 (2001): 293–314, 303–314.

67 P. Lee 1 line 3 = KRI V, 362.2; Ritner, *Mechanics*, 195–96.

68 Recipes from such formularies with instructions for the preparation and manipulation of figurines and drawings are surveyed in Peter Eschweiler, *Bildzauber im alten Ägypten. Die Verwendung von Bildern und Gegenständen in magischen Handlungen nach texten des Mittleren und neuen Reiches*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 137 (Freiburg; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 27–159. For discussions of such objects recovered from archaeological sites, see Elizabeth A. Waraksa, *Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct. Context and Ritual Function*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 240 (Freiburg; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), esp. 12–20 and 124–65; Waraksa, "Female Figurines (Pharaonic Period)," *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (2008); Kasia Szpakowska, "Playing

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execration figurine is also prescribed in a private mortuary liturgy of Middle Kingdom date:[69]

> Words to be said over a figurine (*twt*) of the enemy made of wax, on whose breast the name of that enemy is written with the bone of a *Synodontis* fish. To be placed in the ground in the place of Osiris (= the necropolis).[70]

At several cemetery sites, such figurines have been unearthed.[71] It follows from the incantation that "the enemy" is a being in the beyond, hostile to both Osiris and the deceased. The ritualist urges Osiris to subdue the enemy and, to justify the violence, casts him as aggressor accusing him of being allied with Seth and of having divulged sacred knowledge.[72]

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with Fire: Initial Observations on the Religious Use of Clay Cobras from Amarna," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 40 (2003): 113–22.

69 Coffin Texts spells 30–41, the curse rite proper is CT spell 37. The text witnesses date to the Middle Kingdom. For a text-critical edition of the liturgy, see Peter Jürgens, *Grundlinien einer Überlieferungsgeschichte der altägyptischen Sargtexte. Stemmata und Archetypen der Spruchgruppen 30–32 + 33–37, 75(–83), 162 + 164, 225 + 226 und 343 + 345*, Göttinger Orientforschungen IV.31 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995). For commentary, see Harco Willems, "The Social and Liturgical Context of a Mortuary Liturgy of the Middle Kingdom (CT Spells 30–41)," in *Social Aspects of Funerary Culture in the Egyptian Old and Middle Kingdoms*, ed. Willems, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 103 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 253–372.

70 CT I.156h–157b.

71 Possible examples are: 1) an unpublished assemblage from Elephantine (late Old Kingdom or First Intermediate Period): Stephan Seidlmayer, "Execration Texts," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, ed. D.B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vol. 1: 487–89, 487 and Willems, Social and Liturgical Context," 318; 2) a single wooden figurine of unknown provenance: Georges Posener, "Une nouvelle statuette d'envoûtement," in *Studien zu Sprache and Religion Ägyptens. Zu Ehren von Wolfhart Westendorf überreicht von seinen Freunden and Schülern. Band 1: Sprache*, ed. F. Junge (Göttingen: F. Junge, 1984), 613–19; 3) a clay figurine from Balat: Nicolas-C. Grimal, "Les "noyés" de Balat," in *Mélanges offerts à Jean Vercoutter*, ed. Francis Geus and Florence Thill (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1985), 111–21; 4) a New Kingdom set of stamped figurines from Giza: Georges Posener, "Les empreintes magiques de Gizeh et les morts dangereux," *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 16.2 (1958): 252–70. John Baines argues that all execration materials found in cemeteries should be viewed as the products of private execration, even those assemblages commonly considered state execration: Baines, "Display of Magic in Old Kingdom Egypt," in *Through a Glass Darkly*, ed. Kasia Szpakowska, 1–32, 8.

72 Typecasting and slander are common techniques in Egyptian ritual to justify violence: Hermann Junker, "Die Schlacht- und Brandopfer und ihre Symbolik im Tempelkult in der Spätzeit," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 48 (1910): 69–77; Hermann Kees, "Bemerkungen zum Tieropfer der Ägypter und seiner Symbolik," *Nachrichten der*

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> Behold, that enemy (etcetera; *ḥmt-r*), who is among humans, gods, cattle[73] or in the necropolis, has come against him (= the deceased) to destroy his house, to break in his gateway, so as to let his enemies on the Isle of Fire triumph over him. O Osiris, behold, that enemy, who is among humans, gods, cattle or in the necropolis, is allied with Seth. He spoke openly about your weariness with Seth. He divulged your hidden wounds and divulged that (your) suffering is bad. Your affliction is against him; your ba has power over him. When the other rebels see, they will proclaim your power and announce your prestige. You destroy and overturn him, that enemy (etcetera) and place him under your sandals.[74]

In its preserved context, the curse rite concludes the presentation of mortuary offerings and, like the 'ritual of breaking the red pots,' serves to subdue inauspicious forces at the close of the ritual.[75] Taken out of its context, it is easy to see how the spell, with small changes, could also function in non-funerary situations. It is devised to target any enemy conceivable ("etcetera"), be it human, divine, animal or dead.[76] Moreover, the reference to the beneficiary's house and gateway would work equally well in a domestic context. Thus, the spell may well afford us a glimpse of how execration rites might have been performed in domestic settings, for example to cut out competitors or debilitate an adversary.[77]

Whether private individuals did indeed resort to such rites to resolve interpersonal conflict is not immediately evident from the sources.[78] Compared to the large number of curse tablets and figurines from Roman Egypt, the physical evidence for such practices in private life in pharaonic Egypt is sparse, to say the least. Such materials may well have been produced primarily in wax and papyrus, and were accordingly fully destroyed during the ritual. It is also

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Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse (1942): 71–88; E. Otto, "An Ancient Egyptian Hunting Ritual," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 9 (1950), 164–177.

73 The word is here usually understood as a metaphor for 'the human flock,' following a similar usage in Merikare P 131 and Papyrus Westcar 8.17. Such a poetic reading seems unnecessary, even redundant, because the list opens already with 'humans' (*rmṯw*). A literal translation makes more sense: the enemy can be a god, a human, an animal, or a wandering dead.

74 CT 1.154d–156g. The translation is based on the version reconstructed by Jürgens, *Grundlinien*, 300–303.

75 Willems, "Social and Liturgical Context," 318–24.

76 For the use of "etcetera" (*ḥmt-r*) to substitute for a list of potential enemies, see Ritner, *Mechanics*, 43, fn. 195.

77 Ritner, *Mechanics*, 173–74, 183.

78 Ritner appears to be more positive in his assessment; *Mechanics*, 183–84.

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possible that private execration materials remain unidentified or misidentified as toys in museums and private collections.[79] Even so, recipes for subjecting or inflicting harm on private individuals are conspicuously absent from the formularies for domestic use. There are, however, three ostraca from the craftsmen's village of Deir el-Medina, all dating to the Ramessid period, that preserve recipes to subjugate or even harm.[80] In their textual format and technical vocabulary, these recipes are identical to recipes in formularies. They are clearly the product of the same professional circles. Yet, given their subject matter, it may not be a coincidence that they occur on ostraca only. Such rites may well have been administered and transmitted through less official channels. It is perhaps for this reason that they were never included in the more formal formularies.

Ostracon Armytage preserves two spells to subdue an opponent.[81] In both cases, the opponent is cast as the aggressor and the rite presented as merely a form of self-defense. The first recipe is an execration rite *on the cheap* in the sense that it does not require a vessel or figurine, but merely a handful of dirt. The ritualist tosses the dirt from his right into his left hand and then holds it tightly in his fist, possibly even crumbling it between his fingers. In the incantation, he identifies the dirt with his opponent, likening his hand with a raptor that snatches a fluttering bird in mid-flight. Like the raptor eating the bird and the hand clasping the dirt, so the ritualist will quash the opponent. By identifying the latter as a raging bull, the opponent is rendered a sacrificial animal, ready for slaughter. The ritualist identifies with Seth and Montu, gods of war, and with Osiris, the god who overcame death and injustice.

> Another ⟨spell⟩ for striking a man
> O whoever it is that comes against me ⟨like⟩ a young bull whose horn has tasted a fight. Montu has come that he may take hold of your horn. Seth has come that he may strike ⟨you⟩. In case you want to seize my

79 Angela M.J. Tooley, "Child's Toy or Ritual Object?" *Göttinger Miszellen* 123 (1991): 101–11 and Stephen Quirke, "Figures of Clay: Toys or Ritual Objects?," in *Lahun Studies*, ed. Stephen Quirke (Regiate: SIA, 1998), 141–51.

80 For private ritual in Deir el-Medina, see Joris F. Borghouts, "Magical Practices among the Villagers," in *Pharaoh's Workers. The Villagers of Deir el Medina*, ed. Leonard H. Lesko (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 119–30 and A.G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt. Laundry Lists and Love Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 115–20 and 32–33. Lara Weiss, *Religious Practice at Deir el-Medina*, Egyptologische Uitgaven 29 (Leiden: Peeters, 2015) does not address the types of private ritual discussed in this chapter.

81 Ostracon Armytage: Alan W. Shorter, "A Magical Ostracon," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 22 (1936): 165–68; Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, 1–2 [nos. 2 and 3].

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> feet—I am Montu! In case you want to kill ⟨me⟩—I am Osiris! O Re, O Atum, O eldest of the gods! I will take earth in my right hand and I will throw it over into my left hand. I will say: "Come to me, Montu, lord of today. Come, that you may put NN born of NN into my hand like a fluttering bird[82] in the beak of a raptor". You stand still! Where are you ⟨with regard to⟩ me? I am Montu, star of the gods! I will sever your bones and devour your flesh. I will take away your strength (literally, "a bull's foreleg") by taking it into my hand!
>
> Say these words over earth upon your hand.[83]

The second spell is purely verbal. The incantation is cast again as a form of self-defense. This time, the ritualist claims to vanquish the opponent by way of entering the latter's belly as a fly and wreaking havoc in his innards. Being Horus the son of Isis, he will be victorious.

> Another spell
> You stand still, whoever it is that comes ⟨against me⟩! I am someone who enters on the bed and leaves on the ground (?), a man who fights. You stand still; where are you with regard to me? I will enter your belly as a fly and will see your belly from its inside. I will turn your face into the back of your head, the front of your feet into your heels. Your speech is of no use; it is not heard. Your limbs are weak. Your knees are feeble. Yet, I stand strong. I am Horus, the son of Isis. ⟨I⟩ will come forth on my two feet.[84]

Another ostracon preserves a single recipe for a love-inducing spell, the only one known from pharaonic Egypt to date.[85] There are no practical instructions

82 The translation of *i.t.i.t.* as "fluttering bird" is taken over from Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, 1 [no. 2].

83 O. Armytage, ll. 1–6.

84 O. Armytage, ll. 6–9.

85 Ostracon Deir el Medineh 1057: Paul Smither, "A Ramesside Love Charm," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 27 (1941): 131–32; Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, 1 [no. 1]; Fischer-Elfert, *Altägyptische Zauberspruche*, 78 [no. 59]. Possibly, fragment B of Papyrus Ramesseum XI (Middle Kingdom) preserves another love-inducing charm: Alan Gardiner, *The Ramesseum Papyri* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955) 14 and plate 44 and Georges Posener, "La légende de la tresse d'Hathor," in *Egyptological Studies in Honor of Richard A. Parker*, ed. Leonard H. Lesko (Hanover; London: University Press of New England, 1986), 111–17. For a historical perspective, see Svenja Nagel, "Ägypter, Griechen und Römer im Liebesbann. Antiker 'Liebeszauber' im Wandel der Zeiten," in *Ägyptische Magie und ihre Umwel*, ed. Andrea Jördens, Philippika 80 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 218–80, esp. 221–25.

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to the incantation, but the mention of "seven Hathors clothed with threads of red linen" may well imply the ritual garbing and binding of female figurines.[86] The 'seven Hathors' are invoked, as they were believed to determine the fate of new-born children, an indication that the spell aims for long-term relationships.

> Hail to you, Re-Horakhty, father of the gods. Hail to you, seven Hathors, who are clothed with threads of red linen. Hail to you, gods, lords of sky and earth. Let NN, born of NN, come after me like a cow after grass, like a maid after her children, like a herdsman after his herd. If you do not let her come after me, I will set fire to Busiris and burn up Osiris.[87]

The third ostracon appears to preserve three incantations to silence an opponent in a verbal dispute.[88] The third incantation is entitled "a spell to seal the mouth" and opens with "It is Isis who seals your mouth. You cannot find what you want to say."[89] (O. Leipzig 9 = HO 14.1, line 7). The second incantation aims at paralyzing the opponent altogether and curses him with punishment in the afterlife.[90]

> *Another* (*incantation*). Be silent, be silent NN, born of NN. Your gullet is sore, your lips are [mum?], your tongue does not stir, your mouth is sealed, your eyes do not see me; your back is stiff; your two arms are feeble. Back off; do not leap up against me in your hot temper (*šmm*). You are barred from the sky and you are punished in the earth. You do not know the things {which the eyes see?}.[91]

Whether these recipes were ever put to use cannot be established for the simple reason that their execution did not leave any physical trace. There is however one text, again from Deir el-Medina, that might be an activated curse.[92]

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86 Compare this with P. Bremner Rhind 26.3. For the use of female figurines in ritual, see Waraksa, *Female Figurines*. For the significance of the color red, see pp. 102–13.

87 O. DeM 1057.

88 Ostracon Leipzig 9 = Jaroslav Černy and Alan H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca* (Oxford: C. Batey, 1957), 14.1.

89 O. Leipzig, Eg. Museum Inv. No. 1619, 1–4.

90 Also translated in Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, 2 [no. 4].

91 O. Leipzig 9 = HO 14.1, 4–7.

92 Ostracon Leipzig 8 (Eg. Museum Inv. No. 1619) = Černy, Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, 7.5. For text edition, see Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert, *Literarische Ostraka der Ramessidenzeit in Übersetzung*, Kleine Ägyptische Texte (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 8–12.

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> Get up and go to the east, you hot-mouth (*šm-rꜣ*)! You will not return. You will be in the cool shade in the time of winter. You will be in a hot spot in the time of summer. You will not return. [You] will not return. Hot-mouth, you will not return!

The scribe signed with his name on the bottom side of the ostracon: "It is the scribe Amenemhat, who longs for the [temple] of Amun." As a speech act, the text banishes the addressee from human society by directing him to places hostile to human life. Instead of wishing him a blessed life in the west, which is the entryway to renewal after death, the text sends the addressee in the opposite direction. Instead of granting shelter from heat in the summer and cold in the winter, the victim is exposed to the vicissitudes of the seasons. The last two lines read as a deliberate reversal of a verse couplet from the late Middle Kingdom hymns to king Senwosret III (P. UC 32157).[93] With this intertextual travesty, the victim is also denied protection from the king, which, in Egyptian eyes, equals banishment from society. Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert entertains the possibility that Amenemhat wrote the ostracon to settle a score with one of the villagers.[94] By depositing the ostracon at the victim's door, the addressee was not only identified and cursed but also publicly exposed and humiliated.

A comparison of these four ostraca from Deir el medina reveals that they all work on the same principle. The object of the curse is cast in the role of 'the enemy,' a person who initiates violence or opposes the proper rules of nature. The "hot mouth" is not a specific individual, but a fixed, negative personality type, well known from other texts from Deir el-Medina.[95] It is a role into which any opponent can be cast, irrespective of the particulars of the situation. As such, the 'hot mouth' is on a par with 'the foreigner' and 'the dangerous dead.' Furthermore, the ritualist presents himself as merely executing a defensive measure to prevent further damage and to reestablish proper order. Framed this way, the ritual is not a malign act for private benefit; on the contrary, it is assisting in the preservation of the ordered world and thus, in a way, benefiting society at large. Whether used in defense or to attack, private curses followed in concept and design sanctioned ritual practices.

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93 Fischer-Elfert, *Literarische Ostraka der Ramessidenzeit*, 10.

94 Fischer-Elfert, *Altägyptische Zaubersprüche*, 151–52.

95 For this type of person, see J.F. Borghouts, "The 'hot one' (*pꜣ šmw*) in ostracon Deir el-Médineh 1265," *Göttinger Miszellen* 38 (1980): 21–28 and Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert, "'Dein Heisser' in pAnastasi V 7,5–8,1 und seine Beziehung zur Lehre des Amenemope, Kap. 2–4," *Die Welt des Orients* 14 (1983): 83–90.

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7 Conclusion

In ancient Egypt ritual was viewed as a procedure to mobilize *heka*, the primeval force that enabled creation and continues to sustain the cycles of nature. Personified as the deity *Heka*, it accompanies the sun god on his daily journey through the sky at day and through the underworld at night, thus enabling the defeat of disorder and the regeneration of life. Deities possess *heka* by nature; humans can procure and channel it through ritual. As a force of creation and destruction, Egyptians valued *heka* as much as they feared it. On the one hand, priests mobilized *heka* in rituals to overcome demons, dangerous dead and foreigners, both in temple cult and in daily life. On the other hand, there was a strong belief that one could fall victim to *heka*, either in the form of disease demons or of a curse cast by a hostile ritualist. To counter such attacks, priests produced amulets and performed healing and execration rites. Whether used to protect, heal or destroy and whether used in a state ritual in the temple or in a private rite at home, it was *heka* all the same. In this sense, there was no concept of 'black magic' or deviant, illegitimate ritual in ancient Egypt. Neither is there evidence for the existence of sorcerers working on the social fringes of society.

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER 7

Greece

Fritz Graf

1 General Remarks

It was Greek language and Greek culture that gave the term "magic" and its derivatives to all later Western cultures and languages. Strictly speaking, the ancient Greek word *mágos* in turn is a loan from Old Persian *maguš*, itself a term with ambiguous semantics. But it was the meanings the term acquired in Greek, not in Persian that became central for Western conceptualizations, thus the semantics of *maguš* are only marginally interesting. The Greek term appears for the first time in the late sixth century BCE and was far from unique or even dominant in Greece. This gives us two additional tasks, besides exploring *mágos* and its cognates: we have look into the terminology that preceded the introduction of *mágos*, and we have to explore the other terms that rivalled or supplemented *mágos* and its derivatives.

Another task derives from the overall title of this section. It is but an assumption that *mágos* and its cognates were a term for "ambiguous or unsanctioned ritual;" this assumption has to be tested. The same is true for the terminology that preceded the arrival and rise of the *mágos* words, and maybe to an even greater degree: scholars have somewhat avoided asking themselves whether there was 'magic' in Greece before the introduction of the term *mágos*. To put the problem differently: at least in this chapter on Greece, the task is not to ask for the terminology of ambiguous or unsanctioned ritual, the task is to elucidate the semantics of *mágos* and its cognates, and then to concentrate on their synonyms, both before and after the introduction of *mágos*.[1]

1 Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink, eds, *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Fritz Graf, *La magie gréco-romaine. Idéologie et pratique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994) mark the starting point of much scholarly activity in the field. Since my focus in this essay is on the primary sources, my use of secondary sources will be very selective and somewhat idiosyncratic, and I will refrain from signaling contradictory positions, even my own in an earlier publication.

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2 *Mágos* and *mageía*

The key term for Western terminology is the Greek noun *mágos* that designates a religious practitioner of some sort, the derivative noun *mageía* that designates what a *mágos* is doing, and the adjective *magikós* for everything connected with the *mágos*.

In what follows, I will look at the attestations of *mágos* and its cognates before the end of the fourth century BCE.[2] The bulk of the attestations of *mágos* is ethnographic and comes from Herodotus's *Histories* and Xenophon's *Cyropedia*. They concern the *mágoi* as religious specialists in Persian society, especially in the king's entourage. Xenophon's description is more stereotyped than that of Herodotus: the *mágoi* in the *Cyropedia* are experts on sacrifice and other ritual activities to whose authority Cyrus easily submits. Herodotus's account offers more variation: the *mágoi* are interpreters of dreams and other signs;[3] they perform funeral rites[4] and sacrifices on behalf of the king,[5] and they are a tribe among the Medes.[6]

This leaves us with only a handful of texts before the end of fourth century BCE in which *mágos* and its cognates refer to phenomena in Greek culture. The first of these texts is a famous fragment from Heraclitus, cited by Clement of Alexandria:[7]

> To whom does Heraclitus of Ephesus prophesy? "To the dwellers in the night, the *mágoi, bákchoi*, menads, initiates:" those he threatens with what will come after death, to those he prophesies the fire: "what people call mysteries is performed in an ungodly way."

2 See, among others, Matthew Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001) and Marcello Carastro, *La cité des mages. Penser la magie en Grèce ancienne* (Grenoble: Millon, 2006); see also Jan N. Bremmer, "The Birth of the Term 'Magic'," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic From Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, ed. J.N. Bremmer and J.R. Veenstra (Louvain: Peters, 2002), 1–11.

3 Herodotus 1.120 (dream), 7.19 (Xerxes' dream).

4 Herodotus 1.140.

5 General information Herodotus 1.132 and 140 (here, the historian opposes the *magoi* to the priests of Egypt); sacrifices for the king 7.43 (libations in Troy), 7.133 (horse sacrifice into the river Strymon), 7.101 (sacrifices to end bad weather).—A more detailed and somewhat different description of the Persian sacrifice in Strabo, *Geography* 15.3.13.

6 Herodotus 1.101, see 1.120 about their low position in the eyes of the Persians.

7 Heraclitus, *DK* 21 B 14 Τίσι δὴ μαντεύεται Ἡράκλειτος ὁ Ἐφέσιος; "Νυκτιπόλοις μάγοις, βάκχοις, λήναις, μύσταις," τούτοις ἀπειλεῖ τὰ μετὰ θάνατον, τούτοις μαντεύεται τὸ πῦρ· "τὰ γὰρ νομιζόμενα κατὰ ἀνθρώπους μυστήρια ἀνιερωστὶ μυοῦνται."

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There can be little doubt that the entire list of people to whom Heraclitus prophesies is really Heraclitus's; the rest is Clement's summary of a longer text, with the exception of the final sentence. "Dwellers in the night" (*nuktipóloi*) is a general characteristic of the following four groups: these people are all active during the night, and they all have to do with mystery rites. The *mágoi* go together with three groups of performers of Bacchic mystery rites: the *bákchoi* are perhaps a special group among the initiates of Dionysus, more exalted than the simple "bearers of narthex" or thyrsoi, the standard attribute of the ecstatic worshipers of the god;[8] whereas the 'menads', *lḗnai*, and the initiates, *mústai* might represent two gendered groups or two degrees of initiation. Most likely, the *mágoi* have to do with Bacchic mystery rites as well. If these mystery rites promised a better life after death, as do the Bacchic rites, the threat of fire, Heraclitus' choice element, is more poignant than it would seems at a first reading: instead of a better afterlife, Heraclitus promises a much worse fate. Thus, we learn of priests in Bacchic mystery cults in Persia-occupied Eastern Ionia whom Heraclitus and perhaps others called *mágoi*, "Persian priests."

This fits the meaning of the term in the Derveni Papyrus, a theological and philosophical treatise that dates presumably to the later fifth cent. BCE. Its author, a religious specialist whose specialty seems to be the physical allegorization of mystery rites, refers to ritual acts performed by the *mágoi*:

> The chants of *mágoi* are able to make hindering *daimones* move away; hindering *daimones* are [...] souls. The *mágoi* perform the sacrifice because of this, as if they were giving amends; over the sacrifices, they pour water and milk, with which they also perform funeral libations.[9]

The rituals of these *mágoi* contain 'chants' (*epodaí*), sacrifices (*hierá*) with libations, and sepulchral libations (*choaí*). The term *epodḗ* is associated with healing rites and spells (we will come back to it); here, the chants keep away hindering *daimones*, such as are attested in mystery rites; the author

8 See the hexameter of Orpheus cited in Plato, *Phaedo* 69C = Orpheus F 576 Bernabé: πολλοὶ μὲν ναρθηκοφόροι, παῦροι δέ τε βάκχοι.

9 *Papyrus Derveni*, col. vi 2–7: ἐπ[ωδὴ δ]ὲ μάγων δύναται δαίμονας ἐμ[ποδὼν γι[νομένο]υς μεθιστάναι· δαίμονες ἐμπο[δὼν ὄντες εἰσὶ] ψ[υχ.....]ροι. τὴν θυσ[ία]ν τούτου ἕνεκεμ π[οιοῦ]σι[ν] οἱ μά[γο]ι ὡσωπερεὶ ποινὴν ἀποδιδόντες. τοῖς δὲ ἱεροῖς ἐποσπένδουσιν ὕ[δω]ρ καὶ γάλα, ἐξ ὥμπερ καὶ τὰς χοὰς ποιοῦσι. See the commented edition by Theokritos Kouremenos, George M. Parássoglou, and Kyriakos Tsantsanoglou, *The Derveni Papyrus* (Florence: Olschki, 2006).—The grave where the papyrus has been found dates to the late fourth century BCE; the text, however, shows in its philosophical orientation influences from Anaxagoras (died 428 BCE) but not Democritus (born before 450 BCE) or Plato (born 428 BCE); this dates it the later fifth century BCE rather than to the early fourth.

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explains them as restless souls of the dead.[10] The non-specified sacrifices end with the unusual libations of water and milk; such wineless libations are for example attested in the cult of the Eumenides who are mentioned earlier in the papyrus; but the same substances are also used for sepulchral libations, *choaí*. Overall then, *mágoi* are connected with a group of rituals that are distinct from the regular animal sacrifice; but whatever the details, the context is Greek, not Persian, and the libations that the *mágoi* perform prove a point in the author's argument.[11] He is not one of them, but neither is he very distant from them either. The context is close to Heraclitus's combination of *mágoi* and initiates of Dionysos.

Between Heraclitus and the assumed date of the Derveni author in the later fifth century BCE,[12] there are only four more attestations of *mágos* or *mageía*: two passages come from Athenian tragedy, two from the prose writers. In a scene of Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, performed in 439 BCE, Oedipus is angry at the blind seer Tiresias and abuses him as a false prophet, bought by Oedipus' rival Creon—"this *mágos*, hatcher of plots, this crafty beggar who has sight only when it comes to profit, but in his art is blind."[13] To translate *mágos* as "wizard", as is often done, begs the question: it might well be that the term is descriptive and gets its negative force only from the adjectives. At any rate, even if negative, "wizard" and its Merlinesque associations is rather beyond the point: Tiresias is a seer, and it is his divinatory profession that is expressed by *mágos*. *Agúrtes*, the second noun, is descriptive as well: he is the priest who "collects contributions" on behalf of his cult.[14] Such priests, however, never belonged to established city cults but to marginal and often foreign cults, and unlike the citizen priests, these "collectors" were itinerant professionals, not individuals serving their city: the contrast with the citizen priesthoods must have been enough reason to give the term a somewhat negative connotation.

10 See Sarah Iles Johnston, "Divination in the Derveni Papyrus," in *Poetry as Initiation: The Center for Hellenic Studies Symposium on the Derveni Papyrus*, ed. Ioanna Papadopoulou and Muellner Leonard, Hellenic Studies Series 63 (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2014), 97–100; see also Johnston, *Restless Dead* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 137–138.

11 Scholars debate whether the text talks about Greek religious specialists, as I assume, or Persian ones; a consensus still seems far away.—See the discussions in the contributions of Alberto Bernabé, Franco Ferrari, and Fritz Graf, in *Poetry as Initiation*.

12 See note 9.

13 Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannos* 384–6: μάγον τοιόνδε μηχανορράφον, | δόλιον ἀγύρτην, ὅστις ἐν τοῖς κέρδεσιν | μόνον δέδορκε, τὴν τέχνην δ' ἔφυ τυφλός.

14 See Nicola Serafini, "Sacerdoti mendicanti e itineranti. Gli agyrtai nell'antica Grecia," *Museum Helveticum* 73 (2016): 24–41.—The noun is derived from *ageírein*, to collect or assemble (the *agorá* is the place of assembly).

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But again, as with the term *mágos*, it is the adjective that carries the main weight of Oedipus' abuse, although it is rather derogatory to call Teiresias, the respected diviner and citizen of the city of Thebes, an itinerant seer who is living off the contributions his clients give him for his services.

The second passage from tragedy is easier. In Euripides' *Helen*, a servant describes the sudden disappearance of Helen: it must have happened "through drugs (*phármaka*), the art of the *magoi* or the secret attack of the gods."[15] The passage is fully descriptive; the *mágoi* wield supernatural power to which a human cannot resist.

The two prose passages, one on *mágos*, the other on *mageía*, are roughly contemporary with the Derveni author. First, there is the attack of a Hippocratic doctor on those who propounded a religious explanation and a ritual cure for epilepsy, "people like the *mágoi*, purifiers, begging priests and quacks of our own time, men who claim great piety and superior knowledge."[16] Some of the nouns are derogatory (*alázones* 'quacks', somewhat less so *agúrtai* that appeared also in Sophocles), the others are descriptive. Overall, it is the context and the following relative clause that convey most of the negativity, not the terms in itself. More importantly, the rites connected with the *mágoi* are the rejected healing and purification rites of which the Greek tradition made use to cope with epilepsy and other incurable ills. If we disregard the polemical tone, which stems from the fact that the purification priests were the business rivals of the Hippocratic doctor, and if we take the claim of religiosity and superior knowledge as defining characteristics of these specialists, we arrive at a positive description of religious entrepreneurs that has its closest parallel in the Derveni text.[17]

If already the use of *mágos* is relatively rare in Classical Greece, this is even more so with *mageía*, "the art of the *mágos*". Sophocles' contemporary, the sophist Gorgias, uses the term to defend Helen against the reproach of loose morals. She has fallen victim to the seductive words of Paris, a superior orator:

> Sacred incantations (*epodaí*) sung with words are bearers of pleasure and banishers of pain, for, merging with opinion in the soul, the power of the incantation is wont to beguile it and persuade it and alter it by wizardry (*goēteía*). There have been discovered the twin arts of wizardry

15 Euripides, *Orestes* 1494: ἤτοι φαρμάκοις ἢ μάγων τέχναις ἢ θεῶν κλοπαῖς.

16 Hippocrates, *De morbo sacro* 2: ἄνθρωποι οἷοι καὶ νῦν εἰσι μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες, ὁκόσοι δὴ προσποιέονται σφόδρα θεοσεβέες εἶναι καὶ πλέον τι εἰδέναι.

17 *Pap. Derveni,* col. xx, on the initiators in private rituals.

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> (*goēteía*) and magic (*mageía*) that consist of errors of soul and deceptions of opinion.[18]

Gorgias understands *mageía* as synonymous with *goēteía*, the art of the *góēs*, and defines it by its cognitive action, the creation of deceptive beliefs. Persuasion acts through the power of influential and manipulative speech, "god-containing" incantations (*epoidaì éntheoi*) that shape the soul and deceive human perception.—Plato, an attentive if untrusting student of the sophists, will elaborate on this cognitive theory of *mageía* and *goeteía*, especially in his late *Laws*.[19]

We already met these *epoidaí* in the Derveni Papyrus as a tool of the *mágoi*, although not in the metaphorical context of persuasion of humans, but in the ritual context of keeping away hostile supernatural powers. In Gorgias, the use of *epoidaí* comes close to what we know as erotic binding spells that are attested in epigraphical texts and in a famous passage from Pindar's fourth *Pythian Ode*.

In this ode, performed in 462 BCE for a victor from Cyrene, Pindar tells the story of the Argonauts, with an unusual twist: far from sending her son Eros to make Medea fall in love with Jason, as in Apollonius's version, Aphrodite endows Jason with the gift of erotic binding spells:

> But the Cyprus-born queen of the sharpest arrows bound the dappled wry-neck to the four spokes of the inescapable wheel; and brought from Olympus that bird of madness for the first time to men, and she taught the son of Aison to be skillful in prayers and charms (*epaoidás*) so that he might take away Medea's respect for her parents.[20]

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18 Gorgias, *Helen* 10: αἱ γὰρ ἔνθεοι διὰ λόγων ἐπωιδαὶ ἐπαγωγοὶ ἡδονῆς, ἀπαγωγοὶ λύπης γίνονται· συγγινομένη γὰρ τῆι δόξηι τῆς ψυχῆς ἡ δύναμις τῆς ἐπωιδῆς ἔθελξε καὶ ἔπεισε καὶ μετέστησεν αὐτὴν γοητείαι. γοητείας δὲ καὶ μαγείας δισσαὶ τέχναι εὕρηνται, αἵ εἰσι ψυχῆς ἁμαρτήματα καὶ δόξης ἀπατήματα. I adapted the translation from Rosamond Kent Sprague, ed., *The Older Sophists: A Complete Translation by Several Hands of the Fragments in Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, edited by Diels-Kranz with a New Edition of Antiphon and of Euthydemus* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1972); as the major change, I replaced the end that opposes two types of influence ("One consists of errors of soul and the other of deceptions of opinion") by a wording that is closer to the Greek and identifies the two modes.

19 Plato, *Laws* 10, 909 AB; 11, 933 AB; *Rep.* 2,364 BC.—See Fritz Graf, "Theories of Magic in Antiquity", in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 93–104.

20 Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 4.213–218 πότνια δ' ὀξυτάτων βελέων | ποικίλαν ἴυγγα τετράκναμον Οὐλυμπόθεν | ἐν ἀλύτῳ ζεύξαισα κύκλῳ|215 μαινάδ' ὄρνιν Κυπρογένεια φέρεν | πρῶτον

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The story turns Jason into a culture hero who brought erotic binding spells to mankind, both the instrument used in it, the *iynx*, and the verbal rites used during its performance. The iynx has its name from a bird, the wryneck (a type of woodpecker), which has the ability to turn its head full circle, but in the reality of the binding ritual it is a metal wheel that, when turned on two strings, makes a high-pitched sound. It is important to note that this narration turns the ritual of erotic binding (*defixio*) into yet another cultural achievement in the progress of human culture, as was the invention of the very ship Argo. The aim of the ritual, however, to take away Medea's respect (*aidôs*) for her parents, qualifies it as morally problematic: Greek daughters, especially from families as elevated as Medea's, were expected to preserve their *aidôs*, as the circumspection shown by Nausicaa in her encounter with Odysseus (Homer, *Odyssey* 6.260–285) amply demonstrates.

To sum up the discussion thus far: the six texts from the sixth and fifth centuries present the *mágos* as an itinerant religious entrepreneur, connected with presumably Bacchic initiations that had an eschatological component (Heraclitus and the Derveni Papyrus), with divination (Sophocles and perhaps *P.Derv.*), healing and purification (*On the Sacred Disease*), and with strange supernatural acts (Euripides). Some specialists must have used the term as a self-designation, presumably to cash in on the exoticism it suggested, since the connection with the powerful Persian priestly caste was always possible for a Greek. A treatise entitled *On the Magoi* (*Magikós*), ascribed to Aristotle but perhaps written in early Hellenistic times, insists that the Persian *mágoi* "did not know sorcery (*goētikḕ mageía*),"[21] thus contradicting an opinion evidently then current by opposing Persian (positive) *mageía* to Greek (negative), "goetic," *mageía*. In the same tradition, the spurious Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades* I or "*Alcibiades Major*" accordingly defines Persian *mageía* as "worship of the gods", *theôn therapeía*.[22]

But Greek evaluations of the Persian *mágoi* were rather more ambiguous than the protest of the writer of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Magikos* suggests. For

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ἀνθρώποισι λιτάς τ' ἐπαοιδὰς | ἐκδιδάσκησεν σοφὸν Αἰσονίδαν· | ὄφρα Μηδείας τοκέων ἀφέλοιτ' αἰδῶ. Translation after William H. Race, *Olympian Odes. Pythian Odes*, Loeb Classical Library 56 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).—See Sarah Iles Johnston, "The Song of the Iynx. Magic and Rhetoric in Pythian 4," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 125 (1995), 177–206.

21 Aristotle, Frg. 36: τὴν δὲ γοητικὴν μαγείαν οὐδ' ἔγνωσαν. The late source for the fragment ascribes the same distinction to one Deinon and one Hermodorus, the former a little know Hellenistic historian from Rhodes, the latter perhaps a student of Plato.

22 Plato, *Alcibiades Major* 122AB, talking about the *mageía* of Zoroaster as taught by the Persian aristocracy.

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some, they were priests of another culture, seen by some (like Herodotus and Xenophon) as authoritative or else as somewhat uncanny, as in the historical works of Theopompus, who tells of their power to resuscitate the dead.[23] To philosophers such as Aristotle, they represented an alien philosophy whose doctrines could be cited in the same breath as those of early Greek philosophers.[24] To others, they were simply weird and even sexually ambiguous. On stage, Greeks could delight in actors that were called *magōidoi* ("singers in the style of the *mágoi*"). Aristoxenus of Tarentum, a student of Aristotle, describes them as comic actors that performed both male and female parts; Athenaeus, who cites Aristoxenus, describes them thus:

> The so-called *magōidós* has hand drums and cymbals and his entire dress is that of a woman. He makes exotic movements and behaves entirely without order, playing either adulterous women and procuresses, or drunken men who during their revelries encounter their paramours.[25]

But there is more in this than just ambiguous and titillating sexuality. Hand drums and cymbals are the stock instruments of ecstatic cults; no Persian *mágoi* used them as far as we know, but they were the standard outfit of the Orpheotelests, the initiators into Bacchic cults who relied on the writings of Orpheus.[26] An average fifth-century Greek met a *mágos* not in the Persian

23 Theopompus, *FGrHist* 115 F 64a; he cites the satyr play *Harpalos*, performed ca. 324 BCE at the Dionysia on the river Hydaspes that ascribes this art to the βαρβάρων μάγοι (Athen. 13.68, 595 D).

24 Aristoteles, *Metaphysica* 1091 a 30 cites the *mágoi* alongside of Empedocles, Pherecydes of Syros and Anaxagoras; in his lost *On Philosophy* Frg. 6, he accurately reported on Zoroastrian dualism and regarded the *mágoi* as older as the Egyptians. See also Plato, *Alcibiades Maior* 122ab (presumably spurious), with an equally positive opinion on Zoroastrian *mágoi*: they teach the King "the worship of the gods", θεῶν θεραπεία.—In his *Republic*, Plato has a much poorer opinion on the *mágoi*: in a passage in bk. 9, 572e, he talks about the lawless seducers of a morally healthy youth as δεινοὶ μάγοι τε καὶ τυραννοποιοί, "dire magicians and tyrant-makers" who encourage his irrational passions. The reference here is either again to the Persian *mágoi* as royal advisers, or to the powerful but evil rhetorical power of the seducers, in a reaction to Gorgias, or to both.

25 Athenaios, *Deipnosophistae* 14.14, p. 621C: ὁ δὲ μαγῳδὸς καλούμενος τύμπανα ἔχει καὶ κύμβαλα καὶ πάντα τὰ περὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδύματα γυναικεῖα· σχινίζεται δὲ καὶ πάντα ποιεῖ τὰ ἔξω κόσμου, ὑποκρινόμενος ποτὲ μὲν γυναῖκας [καὶ] μοιχοὺς καὶ μαστροπούς, ποτὲ δὲ ἄνδρα μεθύοντα καὶ ἐπὶ κῶμον παραγινόμενον πρὸς τὴν ἐρωμένην.

26 See the *Orpheotelestai* in Philodemus, *On Poems* 1.181; Janko, and the description of king Ptomely IV Philopator in Plutarch, *Agis and Cleomenes* 54.2. 820D: τελετὰς τελεῖν καὶ τύμπανον ἔχων ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἀγείρειν; see also Plutarch, *Moralia* 60A and the informations in *Testimonia* 1100–1126 Bernabé.

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empire, but in a Greek town as the itinerant priest of Bacchic mysteries, as had Heraclitus in Ephesus.

The fourth century adds a new twist. On the one hand, *mágos* and *mageía* could retain their ethnographical meaning or even gain in positive evaluation: to Aristotle, as we just saw, the Persian *mágoi* can be cited for philosophical theology in the same breath as some Pre-Socratic philosophers. Aristotle's student Theophrastus saw no reason to discredit healing *mageía* when making use of herbs, as his discussion of the herb *moly* as a counter drug (*alexiphármakon*) in healing shows; *moly* was the herb Hermes gave to Odysseus to counteract Circe's *phármaka*.[27]

On the other hand, *mágos* and *mageía* become now associated with morally questionable and reprehensible rituals. To judge from the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Magikós*, it was in this century (or somewhat later, depending on how one thinks of the authorship of the *Magikós*), that the *mágos* was connected with *goētikè mageía*, contemptible ritual acts, and the need for an ethnographic defense of the Persian *mágoi*. But already the fourth-century orator Aeschines can compare the evil rhetorical power of a rival to the actions of a *goḗs* and *mágos*, worse than any earlier evil politician:[28] as in Gorgias and Plato, a *mágos* is someone who manipulates emotions with the power of his words. A contemporary (and rather shadowy) tragedian, Sosiphanes, can ascribe *mágoi epōdaí*, "bewitching incantations", to Thessalian women, famous for their art to pull down the moon.[29] Thus, *mágos* and *mageía* are very slowly narrowed down in their semantic value to designate harmful secret rituals.

This extensive and detailed history of *mágos* and *mageía* between the sixth and the fourth centuries BCE embeds these terms in a network of other terms for free-lance religious specialists and their rituals. *Mágos* is connected with *mántis* "seer", *agúrtēs* "begging priest" and *góēs* and his art, *goēteía*. The ritual contexts of *magoi* include mystery cults (*mustḗria*), purification and healing, but also some extraordinary acts such as to make people disappear or to pull down the moon. Among the ritual means, *epōidaí* "incantations" are prominent, but there is also the use of *phármaka*, powerful substances. In what follows, I will address this semantic network in order to understand the wider context in which *mágos* and *mágeia* were embedded.

27 Theophrastus, *Historia Plantarum* 15.7: the plant *moly*, used πρὸς τὰ ἀλεξιφάρμακα καὶ τὰς μαγείας and introduced in *Odyssey* 10.305; see also Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 25.26–27.

28 Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* (*Oration* 3) 137.

29 Sosiphanes, *TrGF* I no. 92, F 1 (died 336/3 or 324/1).

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3 Ritual Specialists: *mántis, agúrtēs, góēs*

3.1 mantis *and* agúrtēs

The specialist that must have been most common is the *mántis* "seer." Seers were connected with local sanctuaries such as those belonging to the families of the Iamids of Olympia or the Branchids of Didyma. But more commonly, they offered their services on a free-lance basis to entire cities and armies as well as to individuals looking for divinatory information. Their social status spanned the entire gamut from respected, even venerable, to shady, distrusted, and despised. Old Comedy derided the practices of some members of the profession, and Plato poured out his scorn upon the "begging priests and seers", *agúrtai kaì mánteis* who went to the doors of the rich selling their ritual wares—not divinatory information, but all sorts of much more problematic rituals;[30] later, in his hypothetical law on *pharmakeía* in the Laws, he juxtaposes doctors—as specialists in drugs, *phármaka*—to *mánteis*, as specialists for the forbidden "magic" rites.[31] Still, it must have been the seers who were the most visible and common religious free-lancers in fifth century Athens: hence the extension of the term *mántis* to comprise the foreign *mágos* and the distrusted and equally outlandish *agúrtēs*, the "begging priest" or "collector of alms," who collected contributions for the Eastern cults of Cybele and her ilk.[32] The seer Lampon, friend and associate of the powerful Pericles, was lampooned in Old Comedy as *agersikubélēs*, "begging priest for Cybele;" and to orators in fourth-century Athens, the word *agúrtēs* became almost synonymous with a fraud. This might have good reasons: in tragedy, Odysseus was said to have entered Troy as a spy in the disguise of a begging priest, and similar suspicions might have clung to these itinerant priests in the real world.[33] But even without sinister political undertones, social moralists could view itinerant seers as a problem: Plutarch insists that the Spartan law-giver Lycurgus kept them out of his perfect state.[34] This seems to be especially true for those seers who collected alms: several decrees from Greek states regulate the *agurmós*,

30 Plato, *Republic* 364B, see below.

31 Plato, *Laws* 11.933C (see below note 55).

32 See above note 9.

33 Lampon: Cratinus Frg. 62 Kock.—Synonymous with fraud, *apátōn*, according to some Atticist lexica, e.g. Aelius Dionysius, *Attika Onomata* A 30.—Odysseus: Euripid. *Rhesus* 503: ἀγύρτης πτωχικὴν ἔχων στολήν, "wandering priest in the dress of a beggar" and 715.

34 Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 9.3: in the egalitarian Spartan society, without coinage or foreign imports, there is no place for the μάντις ἀγυρτικός, the free-acting seer who has to live from what he collects, the professional orator (σοφιστὴς λόγων) or hangers-on of the rich (τροφεὺς ἑταιρῶν).

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sometimes in all details.[35] Obviously, some control of these figures was felt necessary. It did not help that this type of priest included the despised transvestite eunuchs that performed the cult of Cybele and other Oriental divinities. According to late antique lexica, the Athenians killed the first of them who came to Athens (much to the city's detriment), and they haunt Greek imagination as lascivious frauds in Apuleius' *Metamorphosis*.[36]

3.2 goēs

The proper Greek equivalent to the Persian loan word *mágos* and his art, *mageía*, however, is *góēs* and *goēteía*. Its etymology is clear and accessible to any native speaker: the word is connected with *góos* "the lament" and *goáō* "to lament."[37] Literally, then, the *góēs* is the "wailer", the professional who helped a deceased to move from here to there, and his society to move from loss to reconfiguration. When the term shamanism was still fashionable, Burkert once compared him to the shaman.[38] But this is prehistory at best: as soon as he becomes visible in archaic Greek society, the function of the *góēs* is very different. His mythical prototypes are the Dactyls, ecstatic followers of the Idaean or Phrygian Mountain Mother, Cybele, who invented the extraction of iron ore and the uses of iron, but were also specialists for initiations, binding spells

35 A Samian decree allows the priest of Isis to go on collecting, *ageírein*, as before, *Inscriptiones Graecae* XII:6:1, no. 3; another, very fragmentary decree from the island concerns the collecting by the priest of the Syrian goddess, *Athenische Mitteilungen* 87 (1972) 225, 10.—A decree from Halikarnassos that regulates the priesthood of Artemis Pergaia allows the public priestess to collect "three days before the (main) sacrifice", but without going to the doors: δημοτελὴς ἀγειρέτω πρὸ <τ>ῆς θυ[σί]ας ἡμέρας τρεῖς ἐπ' οἰκίαν μὴ πορ<ε>υομένη, ὁ δὲ ἀγερμὸς ἔστω τῆς ἱερείας, F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1955), 73 (3d cent BCE); a similar provision for the same cult in Kos permits collecting on the first day of the month Artamitios, Mario Segre, *Iscrizioni di Cos* (Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1993) ED 236 (1st cent. BCE); a recently found inscription from Larissa in Thessaly talks about two dates for collecting in a mystery cult, J.-C. Decourt and A. Tziaphalias, "Un règlement religieux de la région de Larissa. Cultes grecs et 'orientaux'," *Kernos* 28 (2015): 13–51 (side A 26, side B 17–19).

36 On Athens, Robert Parker, *Athenian Religion. A History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 188–198 ("the account is obviously not true"); Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 8.24–9.10.

37 The avant-garde poet Timotheos, Plato's older contemporary, could play with the etymology to achieve a new effect, Frg. 15, col. iii 102 (of the stranded Persian marines after the battle of Salamis): ο[ἰ] δ' ἐπ' ἀκταῖς ἐνάλοις ἥμενοι γυμνοπαγεῖς ἀϋτᾶι τε καὶ δακρυσταγεῖ [γ] όωι στερνοκτύποι γοηταὶ θρηνώδει κατείχοντ' ὀδυρμῶι· "Sitting of the seashore, cold-naked, as wailers, with shouting and breast-beating wailing, they were in the throngs of a lamentful dirge."

38 Walter Burkert, "ΓΟΗΣ. Zum griechischen Schamanismus," *Rheinisches Museum* 105 (1962): 36–55. Reprint, *Kleine Schriften* III: *Mystica, Orphica, Pythagorica* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 173–190.

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and counter-spells, described as *góetes* throughout the Greek textual tradition. Orpheus, singer, initiator and seer and himself a *góēs anḗr*, was said to have been their student.[39] Like the early *mágoi*, the Dactyls combine initiations into mystery cults (especially those of Cybele, Samothrace and, in Orpheus' case, Dionysus) with other ritual activities such as ritual binding and its un-doing. Pherecydes calls them not only *góetes*, but also *pharmakeîs*, "manipulators of powerful substances."[40] Unlike the *mágoi*, however, the Dactyls are never said to perform divination, purification or healing. At the end of his discussion of the Dactyls, the geographer Strabo tries to give a synthesis:

> Seeking for metals, and hunting, and searching for the things that are useful for the purposes of life, are manifestly closely related to mountain-roaming, whereas being a begging priest and a *góes* are closely related to religious frenzies, worship, and divination. And such also is devotion to the crafts, in particular to the Dionysiac and Orphic crafts.[41]

The Dionysiac and Orphic crafts, *téchnai*, must be the ritual knowledge associated with the performance of the mystery initiations.

Outside of mythical representations, however, things look slightly different. Alien tribes could be thought of as *góētes*—the African Nasamones and the Scythian Neuroi who turned temporarily into werewolves (in Herodotus); the Getai, another Northern tribe (in Crito, Herodotus' younger contemporary); or the Homeric Sinties, the natives of Lemnos who manufactured destructive drugs, *phármaka dēlētḗria* (Eratosthenes).[42]

But in most texts from fourth century Athens, *góēs* and *goēteía* are used metaphorically, as a slur against rival orators whose rhetorical powers seduce

39 Phoronis Frg. 2 (followers of the Mother, inventors of iron working, *góetes* without details on their *goēteía*); Diodorus Siculus 5.64.4, after Ephorus, *FGrHist* 70 F 104 (next note), see also Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3 F 47 and Strabo 10.3.22–23 who tries to make sense of the many variations in his sources.—Orpheus: Strab. 7a.1.18.

40 Dactyls as initiators: Diodorus Siculus 5.64.4 (after Ephorus): ὑπάρξαντας δὲ γόητας ἐπιτηδεῦσαι τάς τε ἐπωιδὰς καὶ τελετὰς καὶ μυστήρια: "they were goetes and provided incantations, initiations and mystery cults."—Pherecydes, *FGrHist* 3 F 47.

41 Strabo, *Geography* 10.3.23: τῇ μὲν οὖν ὀρειβασίᾳ τὸ μεταλλευτικὸν καὶ τὸ θηρευτικὸν καὶ ζητητικὸν τῶν πρὸς τὸν βίον χρησίμων ἐφάνη συγγενές, τῶν δ' ἐνθουσιασμῶν καὶ θρησκείας καὶ μαντικῆς τὸ ἀγυρτικὸν καὶ γοητεία ἐγγύς. τοιοῦτον δὲ καὶ τὸ φιλότεχνον μάλιστα τὸ περὶ τὰς Διονυσιακὰς τέχνας καὶ τὰς Ὀρφικάς. Translation adapted from H.L. Jones, *Geography, Volume VIII*, Loeb Classical Library 267 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1932).

42 Hdt. 2.33, 4.105; Crito, *FGrHist* 200 F 2; Sinties Eratosthenes, *FGrHist* 241 F 41 (the term φάρμακα δηλητήρια is technical, see below).

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the listeners into making wrong decisions.[43] Gorgias in his *Helen* was the first to introduce this notion when defining *goēteía* as "deceptions of opinion."[44] Several authors insist on the influence the *góēs* has upon the emotions of his victims, including Plato to whom the *góētes*, often identified with his arch-enemies the sophists, are not only deceivers but also imitators of reality and even shapeshifters.[45] This metaphoric use points to an analysis of how the *góētes* achieved their aims: they did so not as much by using supernatural powers as an ability to create false realities through words and actions. In this negative reading, they come very close to the show-magicians of contemporary entertainment and prestidigitation. At least in the recipes of the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri, this sphere is not conceptually differentiated from supernatural acts with the help of demons—but this is a conceptualization that is markedly different from what fourth century Athenians were believing. Outside the world of the Magical Papyri, late antique authors were even more willing to accept *goeteía* as a ritual reality: Augustine is aware of a contemporary differentiation between *goeteía* as the bad and *theurgía* as the noble art of relying on demons.[46] Later lexica differentiated even further between *mageía, goeteía* and *pharmakeía*: e.g., from the ninth century CE:

> *Goēteía, mageía*, and *pharmakeía*, all invented by the Medes and Persians, are different from each other. *Mageia* is the invocation of beneficent demons for a good purpose, as are for example the oracles of Apollonius of Tyana. *Goēteia* is used for the calling up of a corpse through invocations; therefore, it takes its names from the laments and dirges that happen at the grave. *pharmakeía* is when through some lethal concoction something is given to somebody through the mouth as a love potion.[47]

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43 Demosthenes, *De Corona* 276 (sophist); Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 207, *De falsa legatione* 124 and 153 (imitator); Deinarch, *Orations* 62 and 99.

44 Gorgias, *Helen* 11.

45 Sophists Plato, *Politicus* 271C; *Theaetes* 234C.—"Everything that deceives is *goēteúein*" *Republic* 413CE.—Working on the emotions *Republic* 413CE; *Laws 649A*.—Imitate reality *Politicus* 303C, *Republic* 598CE, *Theaetes* 235AB.—Visual illusion, such as perspective painting *Republic* 602D.—Shape shifting *Republic* 380D–383A.—There a few cases where the term is used in its ritual meaning, such as *Laws* 932A–988B.

46 Augustine, *City of God*, 10.9.

47 Suidas, s.v. *goēteia*, Γ 365: γοητεία καὶ μαγεία καὶ φαρμακεία διαφέρουσιν· ἅπερ ἐφεῦρον Μῆδοι καὶ Πέρσαι. μαγεία μὲν οὖν ἐστιν ἐπίκλησις δαιμόνων ἀγαθοποιῶν δῆθεν πρὸς ἀγαθοῦ τινος σύστασιν, ὥσπερ τὰ τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου Τυανέως θεσπίσματα. γοητεία δὲ ἐπὶ τῶι ἀνάγειν νεκρὸν δὶ ἐπικλήσεως, ὅθεν εἴρηται ἀπὸ τῶν γόων καὶ τῶν θρήνων τῶν περὶ τοὺς τάφους γινομένων. φαρμακεία δὲ ὅταν διά τινος σκευασίας θαναταφόρου πρὸς φίλτρον δοθῆι τινι διὰ στόματος.—Suidas's source is the 9th cent. Chronicle of George the Monk (ed. C. de Boor, *Chronicon*,

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This is a differentiation between *mageía* and *goēteía* that would be alien to Classical Athens. A much earlier lexicon on the classical language of Athens, the "Preparation of an Orator" (Σοφιστικὴ Προπαρασκευή), by the second century CE grammarian Phrynichus, recommended the use of *góēs* rather than *mágos* as the correct Attic word. This advice makes the two terms dialectal varieties with the same basic meaning. It is based on a careful reading of fifth and fourth century Athenian texts and corresponds to what we still see in Plato and in the orators.[48]

4 Rituals and Their Means

The itinerant religious specialist is connected with a variety of different rituals that go well beyond the divinatory rites implied in *mántis* or the rites of purification that the Hippocratic treatise *On Sacred Disease* connects with the *kathartēs*, the purification priest.[49] The *mágoi* in the Derveni Papyrus perform sacrifices and wineless libations to calm the hindering spirits of the dead, either in the context of initiation rites or of rites to keep the restless dead away from haunting a society[50]—in this latter case functioning as purification priests. Either way, these rites are different from the main sacrificial rituals of the polis. Pindar describes how Jason, as a sort of ambivalent culture hero, was taught erotic rites with "spells and prayers" and the use of the iynx, "to take away from Medea the respect, *aidṓs*, for her parents:" this severely undercuts the way Greek parents (and their daughters) thought of marriage.[51] When talking of the "begging priests and seers" that come to the door of the rich, Plato gives an equally negative description of their rituals:

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vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904), 74); but a very similar differentiation is found a century before that in Pseudo-Nonnus, *Commentarii ad carmina S. Gregorii* 64 (in *Patrologia Graeca* 38,491, attributed to Cosmas of Jerusalem); see also *Prolegomena in artem rhetoricam* (ed. H. Rabe, *Prolegomenon sylloge. Rhetores Graeci* 14, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931), 31. It might go back to a pagan collection of magical recipes of uncertain date, see Gustave Przychozki, "De commentarii cuiusdam magici vestigia," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 22 (1913): 65–71.

48 Phrynichus, *Praeparatio sophistica*, ed. Ioannes de Borries (Leipzig: Teubner, 1911), 56.

49 Hippocrates, *De morbo sacro* 1.—It should always be kept in mind that the treatise does not say that the *mágoi* etc. treat epilepsy; it says that the people who diagnosed epilepsy as possession were people "such as the contemporary mágoi, purification priests, collectors of alms and quacks:" οἷοι καὶ νῦν εἰσι μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες.

50 *Pap. Derveni*, col. vi (see above, note 10).

51 Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 4.213–218 (for the text above, note 20).

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> Begging priests and seers come to the doors of the rich and convince them that the possess the power, given from the gods in sacrifices and incantations, to heal with joyful feasts if he or one of his ancestors had committed an unjust act; and in case he wanted to injure an enemy, they could against a small expense hurt a just man as well as an unjust one through attacks and binding rituals: the gods, they claim, would help them.[52]

4.1 thusiai

Plato disapproves of these rites because their theology is wrong: gods will never assist humans to bad ends. To achieve his rhetorical goal of discrediting the practitioners, he is sketchy and stresses the reprehensible aspects. The first group of rituals, performed "in joyful feasts", were rituals that contained sacrifices with meals and wine drinking. They were not rites addressed to the restless ghost of an ancestor (this could scarcely be called joyful) but rites that secure a happy afterlife through initiations into a mystery cult, as we know them for the Bacchic cults whose eschatological rites are mirrored in the "Orphic" gold tablets. One also is reminded of the Anatolian initiation rites that the orator Aeschines that helped his mother perform, "in the night using the doe-skin and the crater, cleansing the initiands and wiping them off with clay and corn husks."[53] The crater points to ritual drinking as in the Bacchic mysteries; the doe-skin sounds outright Bacchic. For Demosthenes to exploit it against his enemy, the performance must have been somewhat disreputable, at least in the eyes of a majority of Athenian jury members and when performed by a grown-up member of the ruling class. It does not come as a surprise that the Atticist lexica connect the verb "to wipe off," (*apo-*) *máttein*, etymologically with *mágos*: their information, that start as early as the epoch of Hadrian, might well go back to the fourth century BCE.[54] Again, we are dealing with the same complex of ritual associations that Heraclitus had already denounced.

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52 Plat. Rep. 364 BCE: ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντεις ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες πείθουσιν ὡς ἔστι παρὰ σφίσι δύναμις ἐκ θεῶν ποριζομένη θυσίαις τε καὶ ἐπῳδαῖς, εἴτε τι ἀδίκημά του γέγονεν αὐτοῦ ἢ προγόνων, ἀκεῖσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἑορτῶν, ἐάν τέ τινα ἐχθρὸν πημῆναι ἐθέλῃ, μετὰ σμικρῶν δαπανῶν ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἀδίκῳ βλάψει ἐπαγωγαῖς τισιν καὶ καταδέσμοις, τοὺς θεούς, ὥς φασιν, πείθοντές σφισιν ὑπηρετεῖν.

53 Demosthenes, *De corona* 259: τὴν μὲν νύκτα νεβρίζων καὶ κρατηρίζων καὶ καθαίρων τοὺς τελουμένους καὶ ἀπομάττων τῷ πηλῷ καὶ τοῖς πιτύροις.

54 See already Aelius Dionysius, *Attika Onomata* E 26: ὁ μάγος ὁ ἀποματτόμενος πάντα (written under Hadrian).—See the much later *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v.μάγος; *Etymologicum Gudianum* s.v. μάγος; *Etymologicum Parvum* 36 (epimetrum): μάγος παρὰ τὸ μάσσω.

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The second group in Plato's vignette are binding spells that rely on the help of uncanny powers, directed against an opponent[55]—rituals that bind the tongue of an adversary in court, dampen the success of a business rival, or hinder a competitor in a contest, all attested in the many lead tablets from ancient graves. Lead tablets are recording devices for a ritual voice (as are the gold tablets from other graves), and Plato stresses the role of the *epōidaí*, the spoken incantations, in these rites.[56]

4.2 epōidḗ

The *epōidḗ* (or, in Homers poetical dialect, *epaoidḗ*) is the "song" (*ōidḗ*) directed towards (*epí*) a specific aim.[57] In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' uncles use it to staunch the blood flowing from the thigh wound that young Odysseus' received when hunting his first boar, after they have carefully bound the wound.[58] As in other cultures that make use of such spells (and that show the same combination of expert wound care and incantation), it is the wound or blood towards which the song is directed, not any supernatural power.[59] *Epoídai* were part of Greek medicine. According to Pindar Asclepius himself healed with "mild incantations," *phármaka* (potions, drugs or amulets), and surgery. In a similar list, Plato lists drugs, cauterization, surgery, incantations and amulets as the components of Asclepian medicine.[60] Elsewhere, he knows that midwifes used drugs (*pharmákia*) and incantations to further or slow down labor, and that

55 Although ἐπαγωγή has a wide array of meanings that grow out from its core meaning "leading against" (see Little, Scott and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*), the word seems to be technical in this context, like καταδεσμός. In his law on *pharmakeía* in *Laws* 933D, Plato gives a similar but longer, exhaustive list of these rituals acts: ἐὰν δὲ καταδέσεσιν ἢ ἐπαγωγαῖς ἤ τισιν ἐπῳδαῖς ἢ τῶν τοιούτων φαρμακειῶν ὠντινωνοῦν δόξῃ ὅμοιος εἶναι βλάπτοντι: "if he appears like a person causing damage through binding spells, attacks, certain incantations or other such magical means…." See also Theophrastus, *Characteres* 16.7 where the superstitious man talks about the need for purification because he thinks Ἑκάτης … ἐπαγωγὴν γεγονέναι, "that Hecate has being sent against (his house)."

56 On the gold tablets see Fritz Graf, "Gold Has Many Uses," *ARG* 17 (2016): 22–32.

57 The same concept in Latin *in-cantatio* and the German *be-singen*.

58 Hom. *Od.* 19.456–8: "expertly they bound the wound, and with an incantation they staunched his dark blood" (ἐπαοιδῇ δ' αἷμα κελαινὸν ἔσχεθον).

59 For parallels see Robert Renehan, "The Staunching of Odysseus' Blood," *The American Journal of Philology* 113 (1992): 1–4; for an Irish parallel David Stifter, "A Charm for Staunching Blood," *Celtica* 25 (2007): 251–254.

60 Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 3.51–53: τοὺς μὲν μαλακαῖς ἐπαοιδαῖς ἀμφέπων, τοὺς δὲ προσανέα πίνοντας, ἢ γυίοις περάπτων πάντοθεν φάρμακα, τοὺς δὲ τομαῖς ἔστασεν ὀρθούς; see also *Nemean Odes* 8.48, metaphorical and Plato, *Republic* 426 AB: οὔτε φάρμακα οὔτε καύσεις οὔτε τομαὶ οὐδ' αὖ ἐπῳδαὶ αὐτὸν οὐδὲ περίαπτα οὐδὲ ἄλλο τῶν τοιούτων οὐδὲν ὀνήσει;. An amulet is περίαπτον, something fastened around; this leads me to think that Pindar's Asclepius "fastening *phármaka* from all sides on the limbs" might not mean salves but amulets as

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one needed a combination of herbs plus incantation to create an effective cure for a headache.[61] The Hippocratic author of *On the Sacred Disease*, on the other hand, rejects "purifications and incantations" as a cure for epilepsy.[62] This position might be less unique in his time than he himself suggests: a generation later, Demosthenes tries to discredit an opponent by claiming that he obtained "these drugs and incantations from a servant girl" of a woman executed for use of poison, and that he "plays the wizard and quack and heals epileptics."[63]

But *epoidaí* did not only heal physical afflictions; they also manipulated fellow humans, not always in a desirable way. Aphrodite taught Jason "the prayers and incantations" that belong to the love spell that uses the *ỳnx*; Socrates knows of *epoidaí* that not only create love in a victim, but also make friends, and Aeschylus' Prometheus refuses to reconcile himself with Zeus through "honey-tongued incantations."[64] Twice, Plato lumps *epōdaí* together with binding spells, *katádesmoi*, once in his list of what the seers and begging priests promise, then in his hypothetical law on *pharmakeía* (denoting both poisoning and ritual attacks, see below) where he gives an exhaustive list of forbidden ritual practices:

> Whosoever shall poison any person so as to cause an injury not fatal either to the person himself or to his household, or so as to cause an injury fatal or not fatal to his flocks or to his hives, if the agent be a doctor, and if he be convicted of poisoning, he shall be punished by death; but if he be a lay person, the court shall assess in his case what he shall suffer or pay. And if it be held that a man is acting like an injurer by the use of binding spells, incantations, or any such mode of poisoning, if he be a seer or diviner, he shall be put to death; but if he be not connected with divination, he shall be dealt with in the same way as a layman convicted of poisoning, that is to say, the court shall assess in his case also what shall seem to them right for him to suffer or pay.[65]

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well (the scholiast on the passage is vague and hides his perplexity when summarizing as τοῖς μέλεσιν αὐτῶν περιάπτων τινά, "fastening something on their limbs").

61 Plato, *Theaetetus* 149 CD (midwives); *Charmides* 155 A (headache).

62 Hippocrates, *De Morbo Sacro* 1.

63 Demosthenes, *Against Aristogito* 1 (*Oration* 25) 79: ταῦτα λαβὼν τὰ φάρμακα καὶ τὰς ἐπῳδὰς παρὰ τῆς θεραπαίνης αὐτῆς, ἣ κατ' ἐκείνης τότ' ἐμήνυσεν, ἐξ ἧσπερ ὁ βάσκανος οὗτος πεπαιδοποίηται, μαγγανεύει καὶ φενακίζει καὶ τοὺς ἐπιλήπτους φησὶν ἰᾶσθαι.

64 Pindar *Pythian Odes* 4. 217; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2,6,20 (friends), 3.11.16–18 (love), see the comic poet Anaxadrides, Frg. 33.12 Kock; Aeschyles, *Prometheus* 173–177, see Sophocles, *Oedipus in Colonus* 1191.

65 Plato, *Laws* 11.933 DE: Ὃς ἂν φαρμακεύῃ τινὰ ἐπὶ βλάβῃ μὴ θανασίμῳ μήτε αὐτοῦ μήτε ἀνθρώπων ἐκείνου, βοσκημάτων δὲ ἢ σμηνῶν εἴτ' ἄλλῃ βλάβῃ εἴτ' οὖν θανασίμῳ, ἐὰν μὲν

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In the discussion that preceded the formulation of the law, Plato explicitly distinguished two forms of *pharmakeía*, one using physical substances acting upon the body (straight-forward poisoning), the other ritual means that put terror into the soul of the person so attacked. His main example for these ritual means were "clay images, exposed at doors, on cross-roads or on the graves of the victim' parents" and that must have resembled the lead figurines used for binding spells, of which we have examples from Athens and elsewhere.[66]

4.3 phármaka

This leads to the complex matter of *phármaka*, the substances and—by extension—the acts used in such rites. Originally, *phármakon* was the powerful substance used for beneficent and maleficent purposes alike. In Homer and Hesiod, healers such as Paeon among the gods, Patroclus among men used these substances to heal wounds, and Helen mixed a *phármakon* in the wine she offered to Menelaus and Telemachus when they got lost in melancholy.[67] But Odysseus was also looking for such substances to poison his arrows, and the suitors suspected Telemachus to try to obtain a *phármakon* that he could mix in their wine to kill them.[68] The ambivalence is patent with Circe: using evil drugs, *kakà phármaka*, in addition to her wand, she turns Odysseus' men into animals, and she undoes this with another drug when Odysseus withstands her drugged drink thanks to the good drugs, *phármaka ésthla*, that Hermes had given him.[69] Deianira falls victim to this ambivalence: she smeared a drug,

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ἰατρὸς ὢν τυγχάνῃ καὶ ὄφλῃ δίκην φαρμάκων, θανάτῳ ζημιούσθω, ἐὰν δὲ ἰδιώτης, ὅτι χρὴ παθεῖν ἢ ἀποτεῖσαι, τιμάτω περὶ αὐτοῦ τὸ δικαστήριον. ἐὰν δὲ καταδέσεσιν ἢ ἐπαγωγαῖς ἤ τισιν ἐπῳδαῖς ἢ τῶν τοιούτων φαρμακειῶν ὠντινωνοῦν δόξῃ ὅμοιος εἶναι βλάπτοντι, ἐὰν μὲν μάντις ὢν ἢ τερατοσκόπος, τεθνάτω, ἐὰν δ' ἄνευ μαντικῆς ὢν τῆς φαρμακείας ὄφλῃ, ταὐτὸν καὶ τούτῳ γιγνέσθω· περὶ γὰρ αὖ καὶ τούτου τιμάτω τὸ δικαστήριον ὅτι ἂν αὐτοῖς δεῖν αὐτὸν δόξῃ πάσχειν ἢ ἀποτίνειν. (translation after R.G. Bury, *Laws, Volume I*, Loeb Classical Library 187 (Cambrdige, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).

66 Plato, *Laws* 11.933 B: κήρινα μιμήματα πεπλασμένα, εἴτ' ἐπὶ θύραις εἴτ' ἐπὶ τριόδοις εἴτ' ἐπὶ μνήμασι γονέων αὐτῶν τινες; see Christopher A. Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil. The Defensive Use of 'Voodoo Dolls' in Ancient Greece," *Classical Antiquity* 10 (1991): 165–205; and Andrew T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013): 74–83.

67 Patroclus Homer, *Iliad* 15. 394; Paeon *Iliad* 4.218, 5.401, 5.900, 11.515, 11.830; Hesiod, Frg. 307. Helen Homer, *Odyssey* 4.220; Homer explains that the drug comes from Egypt, a country famous both for good and bad drugs (φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμιγμένα, πολλὰ δὲ λυγρά 230) and for its doctors who are experts in using them, *Odyssey* 4. 227–233.

68 Odysseus: Homer, *Odyssey* 1.261; Telemachus: 2.329.

69 *Odyssey* 10. 212, 230–238, 290–292, 325–327, 391–395; see also Hesiod, *Frg*. 302.16 Merkelbach-West.

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phármakon, on the inside of Heracles' shirt to retain his love, as the centaur Nessus had taught her, but by doing this she killed him.[70] In all these instances, a *phármakon* is a physical substance mixed into a drink or smeared on a limb or a piece of cloth; its effects are both physical and, in the cases of Helen and Deianira, mental (at least in Deianira's expecation).

But a *phármakon* can have only one of two possible physical meanings, as Plato explains in the preface to his law on pharmakeía:

> Following human nature, two types of *pharmakeía* need discussion. The one we just discussed (sc. poisoning), works evil as a body upon bodies according to nature; the other one, using sorcery, incantations and so-called binding spells, convinces those who attempt to do injury that they have the power to do so, but their victims that they suffer injuries from those who are capable of sorcery.[71]

Pharmakeía follows the dichotomy of humans into body and soul, as already Homer was aware. But in Plato's context, which looks at its criminal use, the division is different: the substances work on the body, the ritual acts on the mind, with the corollary that this second form of *pharmakeía* works only as long as people are haunted by their fears. If people would trust each other, this form of *pharmakeía*, that he elsewhere called *goēteía* or *mageía*, would disappear.[72]

4.4 *Ambiguity*

In the reality of historical Athens, things were less neatly divided between rituals that worked on the mind and substances that worked on the body. Certainly, there were the rituals peddled by the itinerant practitioners that seemed to work without substances. But substances were partly used for similar purposes, at least in healing and in love spells. Socrates insisted that to cure a headache one needed the combination of herb and incantation, and already Circe's potion took effect only when she touched the victim with her wand.[73]

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70 Hesiod, *Frg*. 25.21, from the *Catalogue of Women*; Sophocles, *Trachinian Women*; see Christopher A. Faraone, "Deianira's Mistake and the Demise of Heracles. Erotic Magic in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*," *Helios* (1994): 115–136.

71 Plat. *Legg*. 11.932E–933A: διτταὶ γὰρ δὴ φαρμακεῖαι κατὰ τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὖσαι γένος ἐπίσχουσιν τὴν διάρρησιν. ἣν μὲν γὰρ τὰ νῦν διαρρήδην εἴπομεν, σώμασι σώματα κακουργοῦσά ἐστιν κατὰ φύσιν· ἄλλη δὲ ἡ μαγγανείαις τέ τισιν καὶ ἐπῳδαῖς καὶ καταδέσεσι λεγομέναις πείθει τοὺς μὲν τολμῶντας βλάπτειν αὐτούς, ὡς δύνανται τὸ τοιοῦτον, τοὺς δ' ὡς παντὸς μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τούτων δυναμένων γοητεύειν βλάπτονται.

72 Plato, *Laws* 11.933B.

73 As already Eustathius in his comments on *Odyssey* 10.238–9 noted.

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The use of binding spells whose oral part was recorded on a lead tablet existed side to side with that of *phíltra*, love potions, procured from professionals such as the famous fourth century courtisan Theoris of Lemnos.[74] Being substances, these *phíltra* had a tradition of ill-fated outcomes attached to them: but if this happened, and only then, the person who administered the substance would run a high risk of being tried and executed for murder.[75]

What counts more, however, is the ambivalence between material and immaterial and between natural and supernatural effect. Unlike Plato's law, average Greeks did not even try to differentiate,[76] and Plato's attempt remained curiously unique and isolated. This is why, in the city of Teos, the magistrates routinely cursed, among other evil-doers, "whoever directed a harmful (*dēlētérion*) *phármakon*" against the city and its inhabitants, and why some grave epigrams of persons who died unexpectedly suspected *pharmakeía* and cursed the unknown perpetrators.[77] The curse punished someone whom ordinary justice could not reach because the crime left no trace—either because the poison did not leave a trace, or because there might not have been a substance involved at all.[78]

5 From Homeric *thélxis* to Christian Crime

The Byzantine scholarship behind the Suidas etymology, as we saw, collapsed Plato's dichotomy and defined *pharmakeía*, the non-demonic way of sorcery, as the administration of a substance, "when through some lethal concoction

74 On Theoris see Derek Collins, "Theories of Lemnos and the Criminalization of Magic in Fourth-Century Athens," *Classical Quarterly* 51 (2001): 477–493; see also Demosthenes, *Against Aristogeiton* 1 (*Oration* 25) 79 and, in a playful mood, Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.1.16.

75 See Antiphon, *In Novercam* 9; Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* 1.16.2 and *Eudemian Ethics* 1125 b; the mythical prototype is Sophocles' Deianeira, above note 70. See Collins, "Theoris of Lemnos."

76 As many others did not in the past and do not nowadays, as Philippe Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005) reminds us.

77 Teos: Russel Meiggs and David Lewis, eds., *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B. C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), no. 30 a 1–5: ὅστις : φάρμακα δηλητή|ρια ποιοῖ ἐπὶ Τηΐοισι|ν τὸ ξυνὸν ἢ ἐπ' ἰδιώτηι, κ|ε*νον ἀπόλλυσθαι καὶ α|ὐτὸν καὶ γένος τὸ κένο. Grave epigrams: Fritz Graf, "Victimology, or: How to Deal with Untimely Death." in *Daughters of Hecate*, ed. Kimberly Stratton and Dayna Kalleres, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 386–416.

78 The dichotomy expressed in the Roman *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* points to this division, between murders that left a clear trace because committed with a weapon, and those committed by stealth (poison or sorcery) that did not leave a trace.

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something is given to somebody through the mouth as a love potion."[79] Although this terminology is different from the dichotomy Plato proposes in the *Laws*, it follows Plato insofar as the rites performed by itinerant specialists (the *mántis*, as Plato has it) work as much through non-physical as through physical means, through manipulating the souls of their victims.

This psychological effect is the reason why, in fifth and fourth century Athenian authors, the terminology of these rites is often used metaphorically to express specific emotions or to discredit specific actors. A large part of the rites relies on the efficacy of the word, and this efficacy shades into rhetoric itself. Gorgias, that master rhetorician, talked about the *goēteía* and *mageía* of the persuasive word to exculpate Helen; Athenian orators labelled their rivals *góētes* and *mágoi* or used, with Plato, the term *manganeúo*, "to cheat", "to create illusions," in order to discredit their opponents.[80]

The insight that these rites have an impact on the soul is old in Greece: from Homer onwards, they are part of the things that effect *thélxis*, "charm."[81] Humans *thélgousi* other humans, as would Odysseus when talking to Penelope, in the view of Eumaios.[82] Songs and stories do the same, when sung by poets who are inspired by the Muses or even when it is the Sirens's song; in Pindar the power of *mousiké* even makes Zeus's eagle fall asleep and charms the gods, including grim Ares.[83] The effect of *thélxis*, then, is not just a pleasurable feeling of relaxation and enjoyment; *thélxis* brings amnesia: of unpleasant realities as well as of duties one should not forget, even Odysseus' wish to return to Ithaca and to Penelope.[84] An extreme form of forgetting is sleep or the loss of mobility: Hermes *thélgei* human eyes so they fall asleep, Poseidon immobilizes the Trojan Alcathous in an act that comes close to a binding spell, to

79 Above note 47.

80 In Demosthenes, *Against Aristogeiton* 1 (*Oration* 25), 80, a synonym is φενακίζειν, "to be a fraud;" Dioscurides, *Frg.* 5 talked about "culinary illusions" (μαγειρικὰς μαγγανείας). The same verb μαγγανεύειν was used for magic as well: Aristophanes, *Plutos* 310 used it for Circe's action, Plato, *Laws* 11.933 C combined μαγγανείαι, ἐπῳδαί and the so-called κατάδεσεις as means of persuasion.

81 See Hugh Parry, *Thelxis. Magic and Imagination in Greek Myth and Poetry* (New York; London: Lanham, 1992).

82 Homer, *Odyssey* 17.514. On Menelaus's rhetorical skills Bacchylides, *Ode* 1.148.—See also Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 175: ἐπαοιδαῖσιν θέλξει to create persuasion.

83 Homer, *Odyssey* 12.40 and 44 (Sirens: their victims forget wives and children); Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 1.9–24 (21 δαιμόνων θέλγει φρένας).

84 See Homer, *Odyssey* 12.41–42 on the Sirens; *Odyssey* 1.56–57 on Calypso (her means are sweet words).

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make him an easy target for a Greek spear.[85] Even more extreme is the loss of human form: Circe *thélgei* her victims with her *phármaka*.[86] A related result of *thélxis* is love in humans that otherwise would not feel it: this is the power Eros or Aphrodite wields, and *thelktḗria* can simply mean love charms.[87] In this world view, what later is the province of *katádesmoi, epōdaí* and *phíltra* is not yet singled out from a much wider area of the efficacious (ritual) word, sound, and substance.

Some outcomes might be positive, others less desirable, but whatever the outcome the gods are involved somewhere: as actors, such as Hermes and Poseidon, Paeon and Chiron, Circe and Calypso, or as the providers of these forces, inspiring the poets or teaching humans these skills, as Aphrodite did with the erotic binding spell in Pindar. At the end of the Archaic Age at least one individual claimed such quasi-divine status for himself. Empedocles of Acragas, an itinerant Pythagorean philosopher, doctor, and poet, declared that he knew *phármaka* well enough not only to heal but to resuscitate that dead, and that he had the power to manipulate the weather. Gorgias, his student, claimed to have him seen performing (*goēteúein*).[88]

Not even Empedocles claimed all the religious handicraft, *téchnē*, that his contemporaries ascribed to the itinerant *mántis, góēs, agúrtēs* and *mágos*. But unlike Empedocles, these specialists were slowly losing their charismatic aura in the Greek poleis, and some of their skills were more heavily criticized than others. They never could get away with a death caused by their arts, although the official reaction to such a claim was a curse, not a trial. With the exception of *phíltra* that turned out lethal, death by *pharmakeía* remained a private suspicion to explain a hurtful and otherwise unexplained death. The power of the love spell was disruptive in a society whose structures were secured by arranged marriages, but here too its suspicion gave an all-too-ready explanation

85 Hermes and his staff: τῇι τ᾽ἀνδρῶν ὄμματα θέλγει ("with which he charms the eyes of men") Homer, *Iliad* 24.343, *Odyssey* 5.47, 24.3; Poseidon and Alcathous Homer, *Iliad* 13.435.

86 Homer, *Odyssey* 10.213 and 291.

87 Kypris θελξίμβροτος, "who charms mortals" Bacchylides, *Ode* 5.175 (as the force behind Deianira's fatal action); Aphrodite and the desire for children Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 865: παίδων ἵμερος θέλξει; Eros Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 355.—θελκτήριον love-charm *Iliad* 14.215 (of Aphrodite's girdle).

88 Empedocles, *dk* 31 B 111 (a promise to his followers); Gorgias's testimony Diogenes Laertius 8.51.59 (= Empedocles, *dka* 1 and Gorgias, *dk* 82 A). Our perceptions of Empedocles changed in the last two decades, due especially to the newly deciphered Strasbourg Papyrus, André Martin and Oliver Primavesi, eds., *L'Empédocle de Strasbourg* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), and an interpretation that took his archaic features seriously, Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy Mystery, and Magic. Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

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to those whose arrangements were subverted through a couple of lovers. Seers could be bought to deliver the answer that was useful to some and unwelcome to others. This suspicion of personal motives must have been enough to cast doubts on the divine authority of the practitioners who, furthermore, were rarely citizens in the cities where they practiced their crafts. Citizens of the classical poleis, familiar with the power of words and gestures in theatre and court, could deride freelance ritual specialists as illusionists and quacks, and at the same time make use of their skills—as the growing number of lead *tabellae defixionis* and Bacchic gold tablets demonstrates.

Thus, from the late sixth century onwards, the position of these specialists in ancient society underwent a slow change, and with it the way people talked about their arts. The theological reflections of Heraclitus and Plato and the intellectual innovations of the Hippocratic doctors changed discourse and legal practice in the cities and set *mageía, goēteía* and *pharmakeía* on a path of marginalization that was formalized for the first time in Plato's hypothetical law on sorcery, and experienced final codification in the imperial rescripts in the law codes of Theodosius and Justinian.[89]

Suggested Readings

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89 An overview in Nicole Zeddies, *Religio et Sacrilegium. Studien zur Inkriminierung von Magie, Häresie und Heidentum (4.–7. Jh.)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003); see also Isabella Sandwell, "Outlawing 'Magic' or Outlawing 'Religion'? Libanius and the Theodosian Code as Evidence for Legislation Against 'Pagan' Practices," in William V. Harris, ed., *Understanding the Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries. Essays in Explanation* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 87–124.

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CHAPTER 8

Ancient Israel and Early Judaism

Yuval Harari

1 Introduction

Like other peoples in antiquity, the people of Israel were preoccupied with the hardships of daily life, with toil, and with survival.[1] Their voices must have resonated in their own time and place. And yet, most of these voices have been lost. Only limited élites were privileged to leave their mark for future generations on the evolution of Jewish knowledge. They established their memory through canonization processes that relied on choice and censorship. Once the collections of biblical and rabbinic literature—the so-called Written and Oral Torah—attained canonical status, they naturally became *the* representations of *the* culture of the Jewish people in antiquity.

By their very nature, processes of canonization are tied to power struggles waged over truth and social order, matters invariably linked to one another. In antiquity, these struggles relied not only on actual power but also on a claim of ritual power, controlled by agents of *the* "truth" and serving as evidence of their authority. It is thus no wonder that the writings of Jewish élites strong enough to bequeath their views to future generations dismissed "other" agents of supernatural power as deviants, heretics, or charlatans. This negative labeling relied on terminological and narrative techniques that exposed these agents' potential danger and proclaimed their inferiority vis-à-vis the "legitimate" agents of "real truth."

It is from this perspective that the following essay aims to present various aspects of paranormal power and knowledge scattered in Jewish writings from Antiquity. The discussion follows the sources in chronological order, with each section structured according to the issues emerging from the texts—terminology, practices, law, mythology, demonology, slanders, stories, gender, social assets, and so forth. I will begin with the Hebrew Bible, move to the writings from the Second Temple period, and conclude with rabbinic literature.

1 This chapter was translated from the Hebrew by Batya Stein.

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2 Biblical Literature

2.1 *Us and the "Others"*

Deuteronomy 18:9–15 specifies a series of ritual practices and their agents and identifies them with "Gentiles" and their abominations, concluding they are not to be known among the Israelites. These agents and their practices are contrasted with the religion that God commanded to his people and to their sole legitimate representatives—priests and prophets from among the nation. The terms mentioned in the biblical list are not easily translatable. In a world teeming with ritual practices designed for attaining occult power and knowledge, professional specialization expanded and so did the terminology used in the different fields. Often, all we can do today concerning the professional meaning of various terms is guess. But since my concern is to remain faithful to the emic expressions, they will not be translated and will remain in the original. Moses says in this passage:

> When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you must not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations. No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, *qosem qesamim, me'onen*, and *menaḥesh*, and *mekhashef*, and *ḥover ḥaver*, and *sho'el 'ov*, and *yide'oni*, and *doresh 'el ha-metim.* For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord … These nations that you are about to dispossess do give heed to *me'onenim* and to *qosmim*, as for you, the Lord your God does not permit you to do so. The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; him you shall heed.[2]

This short passage twice labels as alien procedures for attaining hidden knowledge (in the cases of *sho'el 'ov, yide'oni*, and *doresh 'el ha-metim* through the dead) and ritual power (in the case of the *mekhashef*) and, precisely on these grounds, claims one should neither adopt them nor turn to their agents.[3]

2 DT 18: 9–15. Biblical quotations will follow the translation of the *New Revised Standard Version*, with occasional changes as required by the discussion.

3 For discussions on these professionals, see Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 31–98; Joanne K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, "Magic, Old Testament," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David A. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 468–471 (on pp. 468–469). Philip Alexander has suggested seeing this list as an inductive definition of magic. See Philip S. Alexander, "The Talmudic Concept of Conjuring (*Ahizat Einayim*) and the Problem of the Definition of Magic (*Kishuf*)," in *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought*, ed. Rachel Elior and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 7–25

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Categorically, then, one should prefer to turn to a prophet from among the people, that is, to the biblically sanctioned agent of knowledge and "truth"—the man of God. In the same spirit, Leviticus too demands, "You shall neither *tenaḥashu* nor *teʿonenu* … Do not turn to the *ʾovot* and to the *yideʿonim*, do not seek them out, to be defiled by them" (Lev. 19:26–31). Among the proscribed practices of divination, (*nḥš* is the most common root for denoting the attainment of hidden knowledge), *ʾov* and *yideʿoni*, which have to do with necromancy,[4] are defined here as defiling and are absolutely rejected. Death from heaven is the fate of whoever turns to them (Lev. 20:6).

Before proceeding further, I would ask the reader to pause and ponder the reason for beginning the discussion with these verses. Why not begin with other prohibitions (such as "You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard" [Lev. 19:27] or "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" [Ex. 23:19]) when seeking to shed light on the biblical attitude toward rites of the type referred to elsewhere in this book as magic, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, augury, and so forth? I argue that we do so because we have some presumption about what it is we seek, based on our own culture and world view. More explicitly, and in line with the editor's introductory essay to this volume, I argue that an absolute split between the emic and the etic is impossible, and all attempts to trace the course of an emic approach are based on some presumption about the domain whose emic features we seek. This presumption, however, invariably relies on etic terms and uses them, be it consciously or unconsciously, as a starting point of research. Total commitment to an emic terminology means full participation, devoid of scholarly reflection, in the linguistic world of the examined society. Once we seek to

(on p. 8). Meir Malul has argued that "passing" one's son or daughter through the fire is also related to divination—Meir Malul, "'Out of the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings You Have Founded Strength …' (Ps. 8:3): Did Children Serve as Prophetic Mediums in Biblical Times?" *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 33 (2007): 1–32. Further on this list, see George J. Brooke, "Deuteronomy 18.9–14 in the Qumran Scrolls," in *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, ed. Todd E. Klutz (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 66–84. On magic as the outsider's practice, see S.D. Ricks, "The Magician as Outsider: The Evidence of the Hebrew Bible," *Studies in Judaism: New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism* 5 [*Society and Literature in Analysis*, ed. Paul V.M. Flesher] (1990): 125–34.

4 For a discussion on the denotation of *ʾov* and *yideʿoni* see Meir Malul, "Jewish Necromancy by Means of Human Skulls and Bones and the Biblical (ות)אוב, (ם)ידעוני, and תרפים," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 37 (2011): 57–94; C.L. Nihan, "1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud," in *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, ed. Todd E. Klutz (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 23–54 (on pp. 29–32); Jonathan Seidel, "Necromantic Praxis in the Midrash on the Séance at En Dor," in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, ed. Leda Ciraolo and Jonathan Seidel (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 97–106.

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mediate between the examined society and our contemporary readers, we cannot avoid melding its terms and ours. Awareness of this issue is essential for both researchers and their readers, since the very selection of the texts to be discussed attests to our etic view of our field of interest, even if we attempt to consider it from an emic perspective.[5]

Another fundamental issue can now be approached: what is the religious conception reflected in the Bible and whose ideas (and interests) does it represent? Precise answers to this question depend on the general view about the emergence of the Pentateuch as a canon and they are actually less significant to my pursuit than the question itself. Posing the question attests to a necessary distinction between biblical law and the culture of the Israelites during the biblical period (whatever this might denote). This religious view and these laws were shaped by élites strong enough to leave their imprint, as creators or preservers, on the evolution of knowledge. As usual, these élites endorsed two contentious paths of discourse: speech and silencing. They spoke of what they wanted and silenced whatever they opposed. What no one spoke of remains unknown, unless uncovered through non-biblical evidence. What they explicitly rejected is known—stigmatized by them as deviant, sinful, and at times even impure, hence forbidden and even dangerous.[6] The reasons for doing this were certainly ideological, but had a political dimension as well: a struggle over social assets, which obviously involved material aspects too, with alternative agents of knowledge and power. Beliefs and rites incompatible with the Jahwist stance promoted in the writings of the élites responsible for the Bible, and particularly with the agents of these beliefs and rites, were therefore vilified by these élites in an attempt to displace them beyond the actual (or imagined) boundaries of society. Mockery, miracle tales, and stories of struggle, laws, divine threats, and legal sanctions—all serve this aim in the Bible.[7]

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5 For an extensive discussion of this issue, see Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 159–175. See also the editor's introduction to this volume.

6 A determination relevant to the rabbinic élite as well, whose writings are discussed below.

7 Many aspects of magic in the Bible considered below are extensively discussed in Rüdiger Schmitt, *Magie im Alten Testament* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004). For a short summary of some of his views, see Schmitt, "The Problem of Magic and Monotheism in the Book of Leviticus," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8 (2008), article 11, https://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/jhs/article/view/6209 (Retrieved: March 15, 2017). We share closely similar views on the actual presence of magical ideas, figures, and practices in the Bible, and on the political meaning of the polemics against magic and other foreign rituals. See also Gideon Bohak's discussion on the biblical paradigm of *kishuf* and on the prohibition against it (magic)—Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11–35. *Cf.* Frederick H. Cryer, "Magic in Ancient Syria-Palestine and in

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2.2 *The "Sign" and the Prophets' Deeds*

The *'ot* (wondrous sign) is an essential component in the propaganda activity of the biblical God's agents. Many of them—foremost among them Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha—were known for their outstanding powers, but they were obviously not accused of hostile acts against God or religion. Their deeds are presented as wonders demonstrating the might of the one true God, in whose name they act. For the biblical narrator, then, Moses's actions in Pharaoh's court point to divine intervention. It was God (or "the finger of God") that inflicted the plagues on the Egyptians, whereas the Egyptian *ḥartumim* and *mekhashfim* were using charms (*lehatim*).[8] Other wonders performed by Moses—whether he carried them out by using his staff (splitting the sea—Ex. 14:15–22, or bringing water forth from the rock[9]—Ex. 17:5–7, Num. 20:1–11) or by recourse to other means or ritual gestures (such as tossing soot from the kiln to cause boils throughout Egypt—Ex. 9:8–10, or throwing a piece of wood into the water in order to sweeten it—Ex. 15:23–25), are also presented as human indications of God's power and loving kindness. God commands the ritual gesture to be performed and brings about the wonder that follows it. Ritual gestures of this kind, then, are not entirely negated in the Bible. Quite the contrary: they serve as important means of persuasion. Together with the wondrous transformation that takes place in the world as a result of their performance by the "prophets of truth," they serve as signs

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the Old Testament," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Biblical and Pagan Societies*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 97–152; Thomas C. Römer, "Competing Magicians in Exodus 7–9: Interpreting Magic in the Priestly Theology," in *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, ed. Todd E. Klutz (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 12–22. On the tension in the Bible between theology and folkloric, magical elements, see Benjamin Uffenheim, *Early Prophecy in Israel*, trans. David Louvish (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), 480–503. For the (now discarded) view that there is no magic in the Bible, see Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel from Its Beginning to the Babylonian Exile*, translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 78–87.

8 On the cultural and semiotic Egyptian space that was the scene of this struggle, and on the (possible) way it was perceived by the *ḥartumim*, see Scott B. Noegel, "Moses and Magic: Notes on the Book of Exodus," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 24 (1996): 45–59. On the possibility that the idiom *'ṣba' 'elohim* (God's finger) does not mean God's might to the *ḥartumim* but Aaron's staff, see Bernard Couroyer, "Le 'Doigt de Dieu' (Exode VIII, 15)," *RB* 63 (1956): 481–95.

9 On this episode in the context of the Bible's attitude to magic, see Jacob Milgrom, "Magic, Monotheism and the Sin of Moses," in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God*, ed. Herbert B. Huffmon, Frank A. Spina, Alberto R. Green (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 251–65; William H. Propp, "The Rod of Aaron and the Sin of Moses," *JBL* 107 (1998): 19–26.

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pointing to the power of the God they represent and proof of the ideology they spread in God's name.

Aaron and his staff are described in similar terms. The wondrous transformations of his staff—turning into a *tannin* (a snake or a crocodile) in Pharaoh's court (Ex. 7:8–12) and sprouting in the desert (Num. 17:16–24)—follow God's plan and command and, as such, offer proof of divine might while also pointing to God's chosen one. The bronze serpent that Moses created in the desert to heal the people from the poisonous serpents that God had sent against them (Num. 21:9) also functions in this way. Presented as a heavenly initiative, it serves as an expression of God's might rather than of Moses' performative knowledge and power.[10]

Moses's performative deeds, however, were perceived as legitimate even when not commanded by God but resulting from Moses's initiative as, for instance, when Moses used his staff to win the war against Amalek in Rephidim (Ex. 17:8–13). Indeed, Moses and Aaron were not condemned even when acting against God's explicit will, as we find in the story of Moses and Aaron halting the plague that God had visited upon the nation (Num. 17:12–13).[11]

This perception of the wonder as merely a mutual signaling of God and his earthly representatives—humans pointing to divine intervention in a world that changes its laws, which in turn signals the privileged status of those who had pointed to it—also characterizes the hagiographic series of stories about Elijah and Elisha. The tales about them—a teacher and a disciple who were wandering agents of ritual power and, through words, gestures, materials, and objects (a robe, flour, salt, sticks) could control rain and the flow of streams, turn a morsel of food into infinite plenty, cover a long distance in a short time, split a river and cross it, sweeten spring water, float iron on water, send predators out to cause harm, spread leprosy, strike people blind, impregnate women, revive the dead, and so forth and so forth (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 13)—were perceived in their biblical version as pointing to the might of God, who they represented on earth, rather than as undermining it.[12]

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10 According to 2 Kings 18:4 *Neḥushtan*, "the bronze serpent that Moses had made," was worshipped in Jerusalem until Hezekiah removed it together with other idolatrous signs. See further, Karen R. Joines, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament* (Haddonfield, NJ: Haddonfield, 1974), 61–96.

11 On the rabbinic view stating that Moses instructed Aaron according to the secret knowledge he had received from the angel of death, see bShab. 89b. See also Yuval Harari, "Moses, the Sword, and *The Sword of Moses*: Between Rabbinical and Magical Traditions," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 12 (2005): 293–329 (on 321–25).

12 Even though God is absent from many of the stories about Elisha and the prophet appears to be exercising his own power, the biblical narrator clearly does not think of this power as contradicting or undermining heavenly omnipotence. On the stories about Elijah and

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2.3 *Priestly Practices for Attaining Hidden Knowledge*

Supernatural advantages were also found among other representatives of God on earth—the priests. In this case, however, the issue is not charismatic power but institutionalized control through supernatural knowledge and power. Even more markedly than with the prophets, the priestly establishment is presented solely as a mediator of divine power. One prominent example is the practice of inquiring by means of the *urim ve-thummim*, an instrument used for gaining hidden knowledge and connected mainly to the High Priest (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21).[13] Another example is the test of the woman suspected of adultery (Num. 5:11–31). In its biblical model, the ordeal testing the woman by making her drink a curse dissolved in water expresses divine intervention and judgment that, it is implied, will appear through the exclusive mediation of the priesthood and in its exclusive place of worship—the tabernacle.[14]

Elisha and on their images, see Alexander Rofé, "The Classification of the Prophetical Stories," *JBL* 89 (1970): 427–40; Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories: The Narratives about the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, Their Literary Types and History* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), passim (Hebrew). *Cf.* the discussions on the charismatic power of the Man of God (*'ish ha-'elohim*) in Raphael Hallevy, "Man of God," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 17 (1958): 237–44; Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 81–95. On magical elements in a broader range of prophetic stories, see Georg Fohrer, "Prophetie und Magie," in *Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie (1949–1965)*, ed. Fohrer, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 99 (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1967), 242–64.

13 See Cornelis van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997). *Cf.* Wayne Horowitz and Victor Hurowitz, "Urim and Thummim in Light of a Psephomancy Ritual from Ashur (*LKA* 137)," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 21 (1992): 95–115 (with Irving L. Finkel's reservations—Finkel, "Black and White: Remarks on the Assur Psephomancy Ritual," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 85 (1995): 271–76); Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 209–15.

14 From the extensive literature on this biblical ordeal, see Alice Bach, "Good to the Last Drop: Viewing the Sotah (Numbers 5.11–31) as the Glass Half Empty and Wondering How to View it Half Full," in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clined (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 26–54; Herbert C. Brichto, "The Case of the *Sotah* and a Reconsideration of Biblical 'Law'," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 46 (1975): 55–70; Michael Fishbane, "Accusation of Adultery: A Study of Law and Scribal Practice in Numbers 5:11–31," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 45 (1974): 25–45; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Strange Case of the Suspected Sotah (Numbers V 11–31)," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984): 11–26; Jacob Milgrom, "The Case of the Suspected Adulteress, Numbers 5:11–31: Redaction and Meaning," in *The Creation of Sacred Literature*, ed. Richard E. Friedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 69–75; Daniel Miller, "Another Look at the Magical Ritual for a Suspected Adulteress in Numbers 5:11–31," *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 5 (2010): 1–16; Julian Morgenstern, "Trial by Ordeal among the Semites and in Ancient Israel," *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1925), 113–43.

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2.4 *Delegitimizing the "Other": Ritual Power, Truth, and Social Assets*

All these manifestations of paranormal power and hidden knowledge were perceived as legitimate, not because they were essentially different from the Other's (forbidden) manifestations but because they were performed by legitimate agents of *the* truth as conceived and promoted by the creators and narrators of the Bible. Had they been performed by other agents, who denied this truth, they would not have been acknowledged by the people of Israel. Deuteronomy 13:2–6 explicitly states so:

> If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams (*ḥolem ḥalom*) appears among you and he gives you a sign or a portent, and the sign or the portent declared by him take place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (whom you have not known) "and let us serve them," you must not heed the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you indeed love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul … But that prophet or dreamer of dreams shall be put to death for having spoken treason against the Lord your God.

The crux, then, is "the word." If it is "the word of the Lord," that is, if it represents the religious conception of the Bible's creators, the wondrous sign accompanying it is not only legitimate but even desirable, proof of its ostensible performer's legitimacy as an emissary of the "divine truth." But if such a sign accompanies some other truth, competing with the biblical, then it is no proof at all! Quite the opposite, it is in the category of a distortion meant to serve as a test by God. The standing of the "word" thus dictates the standing of the deed as one to be negated and annulled (when viewed as a divine test), and also the fate of the purportedly powerful agent of signs and portents, who is to be killed.

The deuteronomist writer may have hoped for such a fate for a misleading prophet from among the people. If arising within the community, such a prophet posed a graver threat to the religious leadership than any lurking outside in the shape of agents of supernatural knowledge and power identified with a foreign cult. Internal unrest, particularly if backed by "a sign or a portent," was more dangerous than outside temptations. It was also within the establishment's (actual or imagined) control, hence the demand to destroy them.

The command "You shall not let a *mekhasheḥfah* live" (Ex. 22:17) should apparently be understood in this context as well. *Mekhashef* (male, from the root *kšf*, denoting the sphere of illegitimate ritual power) is mentioned, as noted, in the list of alien experts cited at the beginning of this article. But although

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the entire list dealing with the theoretical view of forbidden and allowed is formulated in masculine terms, the legal imperative is issued in a feminine context—"you shall not let a *mekhashefah* [fem. sing.] live." Considering the mentions of *mekhashef* (masc. sing.) and *kashafim* (masc. plural) in the Bible,[15] it is hard to assume that this verse alludes to a reality where *keshafim* (sorceries) were mainly a feminine vocation. What appears more plausible is that the verse alludes to a common situation (in other times and cultures too) in which men accused women of witchcraft.[16] As in all other cases discussed in this chapter, the Bible does not define who is a *mekhashefah* nor specify the deeds (or type of deeds) due to which her death is called for. Instead, it reveals broad concern about the possibility of women wielding a concealed, unsupervised power liable to undermine the men's self-confidence and social order; it was thus perceived as dangerous and threatening, and labeled as *kishuf*.[17]

The fear of women, perceived as "other" in men's eyes, resulted in a perception of female power as also essentially "other" and its labeling as (illegitimate) *kishuf*. Although the Bible does not tell us what *keshafim* are, it displays absolute intolerance toward the women accused of it.[18] As in the case of the prophet who uses signs and portents but incites (above), or of the *'ov* and

15 Deut. 18:10; Ex. 7:11; Jer. 27:9; Mal. 3:5, Dan. 2:2. On the biblical Hebrew *kšf*, see G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1980–2006), 7:360–66.

16 I disagree with the move endorsed by Yitschak Sefati and Jacob Klein, extrapolating from this biblical law, through "the popular belief" in the engagement of women in sorcery, to "the phenomenon of flourishing witchcraft among women." See Yitschak Sefati and Jacob Klein, "The Law of the Sorceress (Exodus 22:17[18]) in the Light of Biblical and Mesopotamian Parallels," in *Sefer Moshe: The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume*, ed. Chaim Cohen, Avi Hurvitz, and Shalom M. Paul (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 171–190. Great caution is required when concluding that accusations of magic (especially in a legalistic context) reflect a reality of performing magic. For this view, see (among many others) Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas (London: Tavistock, 1970), 17–45; John Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 24–25. See further, below.

17 Several anthropologists supported this approach in different contexts. See, for example, Edmund R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology* (London: Athlone Press, 1966), esp. 21–27; Stanley J. Tambiah, "On Flying Witches and Flying Canoes: The Coding of Male and Female Values," in Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 287–315.

18 Another aspect of men's fear of women's power is the men's attitude toward feminine sexuality and its potential for seduction. It comes as no surprise then, that harlotry and *keshafim* were linked in the Bible (as they were later as well, in rabbinic literature). See, for example, 2 Kings 9:21–22, Nahum 3:1 ff., and below.

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yideʿoni (below), representatives of the divine "truth" command in regard to the *mekhashefah* as well that the threat must be removed altogether—she is to be killed.

Death, as noted, was also the sentence imposed on the *ʾov* and the *yideʿoni*. Along with the declaration that God himself will destroy those who turn to them (Lev. 20:6), the people of Israel are commanded to ensure that the destruction takes place. In this case, women and men alike are mentioned as liable to die for engaging in these necromantic practices (Lev. 20:27). We are told that Saul and Josiah indeed cleansed the land of *ʾovot* and *yideʿonim* (1 Sam. 28:3, 9; 2 Kings 23:24). Nevertheless, Saul still consulted the *baʿalat haʾʾov* at En Dor when all the legitimate means he adopted for inquiring from God—dreams, *urim*, and prophets—proved of no avail.

The people, like Saul, probably wavered between awareness of the official doctrine that negated all such practices and disregard of it when necessary. Surprising evidence of such an attitude is apparently found in the prophecy of Isaiah (3:1–3): "For now the sovereign, the Lord of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah … warrior and soldier, judge and prophet, and *qosem* and elder, captain of fifty and dignitary, counselor and *ḥakham ḥarashim* and *nevon laḥash*." Including people skilled in *qesamim, ḥarashim*, and *leḥashim* among the heads of the nation and its leaders is puzzling.[19] Their inclusion, however, is apparently concrete evidence of their actual status, despite the unyielding theological-political opposition to them.

2.5 *Performative Speech: Cursing and Using the Ineffable Name*

Whenever agents of supernatural knowledge or power are mentioned in the Bible, no information is provided on the practices that characterized them and earned them their titles. Although such details may not have been necessary in the society where these experts operated and where their titles were common, the Bible is less interested in the nature of these practices than in confronting their operators. Rather than specific deeds, what was negated was the very existence of practices that were identified and labeled as *niḥush, kishuf, ʾov*, and so forth. Since no details are provided on these practices, the reader is left with the consistently hostile and dismissive pointing at those

19 The root *qsm* (*qosem* is the person who performs *qesamim*) has a meaning close to *nḥš*, which denotes the sphere of hidden knowledge. Compare Num. 23:23, 'there is no *naḥash* in Jacob and no *qesem* in Israel', and see Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 96–98; Botterweck, Ringgren and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary*, 13: 72–77. The root *ḥrš* (*ḥarashim*) indicates the sphere of ritual power, whereas *lḥš* (*leḥashim*) combines whisper and spell.

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engaged in them: *menaḥesh, me'onen, ḥover ḥaver, qosem, mekhashefah*, and so forth.[20]

Circumstances are similar regarding the blasphemer (*meqalel*).[21] Descriptions of acts of cursing or wordings of curses are not explicit in the Bible, but their power was undoubtedly perceived as real. The curse, which was also attributed to God (for example, Gen. 8:1, 12:3; Deut. 28–30), was used as a ritual means designed to harm. Though an obligatory, collective, and public curse rite is once demanded by God (Deut. 27:11–26), these harmful rituals are usually performed privately. Since the power of the curse is embodied in the very act of speech, its performative power is available to all, threatening, and uncontrollable. Curses are emphatically prohibited in the Bible in three contexts: God, parents, and leaders of the people.[22] Concerning the first two, infringements are punishable by death. The prohibition on cursing the deaf (Lev. 19:14) apparently shows that, in order to be effective, the curse must be stated aloud and in public and the one being cursed could, perhaps having heard it, act to rescind it (an option barred to the deaf).[23]

In two instances, blasphemers use God's name. One is the account of Elisha's journey from Jericho to Bethel, when some small boys came out and mocked his bald head. When Elisha turned around and saw them, "he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys" (2 Kings 2:24). This explicit and unique example of the deed and its effectiveness should be compared to the story about the son of the Israelite woman who "*naqav* the name" and cursed God (for which he was put to death). Though the details are not fully clear, this story apparently points to some use of the name of God in a curse ritual.[24] This use of God's name was utterly forbidden following the account of this event, and death was imposed on those infringing the prohibition (Lev. 24:10–16). This matter is no doubt related to the third commandment, "You shall not make wrongful use

20 The prohibition "You shall neither *tenaḥashu* nor *te'onenu*" (Lev. 19:26), which refers to the acts themselves rather than to their agents, does not relate to specific deeds either but to the label denoting them. Although the context may point to acts performed by individuals, the formulation can also be interpreted as forbidding Jews to become experts in this field or to seek these experts' services.

21 On curses and cursing in the Bible, see Botterweck, Ringgren and Fabry, *Theological Dictionary*, 13: 37–44; Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 244–50.

22 God: Ex. 22:27; Lev. 24:11–15; Parents: Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9; leaders: Ex. 22:27.

23 Linking the prohibition on cursing the deaf to the command "You shall not put a stumbling-block before the blind" points to this as an instance of social legislation.

24 The root *nqb* is used in the Bible in two denotations, mentioning a name or making a hole. The possibility of *qb*(*b*)—to curse—has also been suggested. See Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 17–18 and notes 22, 23.

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of the name of the Lord your God" (Ex. 20:6; Deut. 5:10). Surprisingly, however, while anyone who mentions God's name and curses is sentenced to die, when Elisha curses the mocking boys in God's name, the event goes unpunished and no fault is found with him.

2.6 *Conclusion*

Agents of paranormal knowledge and power were common among the Israelites as well as among their neighbors, and the Bible is not indifferent to them. Many of their rituals played a significant role in daily life, and the semantic field related to them was relatively broad. It originated in the Hebrew roots *kšf, lḥš, ḥrš, ḥbr, qb*(*b*)*, qsm, nḥš, yd'* and *'nn*, some of which have correlative meanings in other Semitic languages as well. Practices of consulting the dead are sometimes introduced as such through their name—*sho'el 'ov, doresh el ha-metim* (one who asks a ghost; one who consults the dead).

Since the Bible (or, more precisely, those whose views are dominant in it) could not rid the nation of these agents through a command to kill them, it sought to distance the people of Israel from them, both explicitly and indirectly: it commanded the children of Israel not to consult them, while simultaneously depicting them as having limited power by comparison to that of God and his earthly representatives. The Bible, then, recognizes the effectiveness of foreign agents of supernatural power and knowledge operating in the world, but consistently reiterates their inferiority vis-à-vis those who act on God's behalf and under his auspices.[25] Some prophets explicitly conveyed this idea.[26] The most prominent examples are the stories of Moses and Aaron at Pharaoh's court, (Ex. 7–9), the curse of Balaam that turned into a blessing (Num. 22–24), and Daniel's abilities by comparison to those of the Persian "wise men" (Dan. 1–2).

3 Writings from the Second Temple Period

Notable in sources from the Second Temple period (mainly from the second century BCE to the end of the first century CE) is the dearth of references to *kishuf*, and particularly of accusations about the use of *keshafim* (meaning hostile attribution to some "other" ritual activity meant to affect the world).

25 To those mentioned previously, one should also add the *hoverim* of the heavens, who tell the future by the stars, the *'ashafim*, the *gazrin*, and the *kasdim.* See Is. 47:13, Dan. 1:20, 2:27, 5:11. *Cf.* Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 28–31; Schmitt, *Magie*, 107–22.

26 See, e.g., Is. 8:19, 19:3; Jer. 27:9–10.

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This absence is especially notable given the factionalism and sectarianism that characterized Jewish society of the time—social circumstances that tend to invite such accusations.[27] Sources mentioning the use of ritual practices of the type discussed in this chapter—the laying-on of hands for healing, the mention of God's name to cause harm, or the exorcising of demons—attribute these actions to biblical heroes: Abraham, Moses, and Solomon.[28] Their actions are presented in these sources as not only legitimate but also, as in the biblical model, as attesting to the superiority of the ethno-religious ideology represented by these heroes, which the authors of these sources seek to promote through the stories about them. In the Apocrypha, some of this activity became in principle legitimate.[29]

3.1 *Demonology and Anti-Demonic Practices*

Evil spirits (*ruḥot raʿot*) were part of Jewish cosmology in Antiquity. They were perceived as powerful, destructive and invisible creatures, deeply involved with human life and fortune. Confronting them in everyday life involved acts of healing and defense, but since the demons were beyond material reality every struggle with them involved means of ritual power.

To judge by the Book of Jubilees, anti-demonic activity was perceived in positive terms not only due to its therapeutic effects but also on ideological grounds. The myth of the angels' rebellion and their descent to earth to mate with women is related in both 1 Enoch and in the Book of Jubilees in highly elaborate versions, very different from the one found in Gen. 6:1–4. This sinful mating of angels and women, so we are told, contradicted and undermined the divine plan and gave rise to the evil spirits on earth.[30] When humanity could no longer tolerate the burden of the *nefilim*, who were the offspring of

27 See Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 75–78.

28 On the harmful results of Moses' invocation of God's name to Pharaoh, see the passage by Artapanus quoted in Eusebius, *Praeo. Ev.* IX, 27. On the two others, see below.

29 For a detailed discussion of the issues discussed here in brief, see Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 295–316. On demonology, see Gideon Bohak, "Jewish Exorcism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple," in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012), 277–300; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 88–114.

30 See 1 Enoch, chs. 6–16, esp. 15; Jubilees, chs. 5:1–11, 10:1–14. On this myth and its implications for Second Temple Judaism and for early Christianity, see Annette Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. chapters 1–3 (and the bibliography). This event also marks the introduction of illegitimate ritual practices into the world (see below).

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this mating, it prayed for heavenly aid. God then intervened and ended the chaos by instructing the ministering angels to capture and punish the "fallen" angels and ordering their sons to kill one another. The souls of the *nefilim* left their bodies after their death but remained on earth as evil spirits (and even survived the flood). According to this myth, then, evil spirits were a foreign element in the world, a chaotic deviation from the cosmic order designed by God.

These malevolent spirits then attacked Noah's sons both physically and morally, and God commanded that they be locked away. But their leader, Mastema, asked to keep some of them with him, and God finally consented to one tenth of the evil spirits remaining on earth in Mastema's service.[31] The influence of chaotic and painful elements that emerged in the world due to sinful relations between rebelling angels and human females was thus restrained and placed under heavenly supervision. That being so, the angel recounts,

> He [God] told one of us that we should teach Noah all their medicines because he knew that they would neither conduct themselves properly nor fight fairly … We told Noah all the medicines for their diseases with their deceptions so that he could cure (them) by means of the earth's plants. Noah wrote down in a book everything (just) as we had taught him regarding all the kinds of medicine, and the evil spirits were precluded from pursuing Noah's children.[32]

The idea of a written book of exorcism appears here for the first time in Jewish tradition—heavenly knowledge is brought down and given to humans following God's command.

Exorcistic practices are documented in several Second Temple sources. Preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls are a few sectarian texts (including the "Songs of the *Maskil* [instructor]" and a handful of others) on the chasing away of evil spirits.[33] Genesis Apocryphon (also in these Scrolls) tells how, through prayer

31 See 1 Enoch 15:11–12; Jubilees 7:26–27, 10:1–9, 12:19–20, 15:31–32. *Cf.* Philip S. Alexander, "The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years*, ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam, vol. 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998–99), 331–353; James C. VanderKam, "The Demons in the *Book of Jubilees*," in *Die Dämonen: Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt die Dämonen*, ed. Armin Lange, Hermann. Lichtenberger, and K.F. Diethard Römheld (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 339–364.

32 Jubilees 10:10–13. Tr. James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), 59–60.

33 See the discussions by Philip S. Alexander, "'Wrestling Against Wickedness in High Places': Magic in the Worldview of The Qumran Community," in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield

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and the laying-on of hands, Abraham successfully removed the evil spirit that God had sent to smite Pharaoh's house.[34] Josephus notes that David expelled the evil spirit that had attacked King Saul by playing music and singing songs, while pseudo-Philo, in the *Book of Biblical Antiquities* (60), gives the text of the incantation used by David.[35] The Book of Tobit tells how Tobit expelled Asmodeus (who had killed his bride's seven previous husbands) from their wedding chamber, by burning the liver and the heart of a fish.[36] The Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke tell the story of Jesus, who was an expert exorcist, and of the role that exorcistic acts may have played in a person's religious calling in the contemporary Jewish society.[37] Josephus describes at length a public event in which a Jew named Elazar expelled a spirit from the body of a possessed person using a seal, some kind of root, and exorcistic incantations composed by Solomon.[38] In none of these sources is there even a hint of rebuke concerning these deeds; indeed, their protagonists actually take pride

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Academic Press, 1997), 318–37; Alexander, "The Demonology"; Joseph Naveh, "Fragments of an Aramaic Magic Book from Qumran," *Israel Exploration Journal* 48 (1998): 252–61; Bilhah Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 227–72.

34 Gen. Apoc. XX: 16–29. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20)*, 3rd ed. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2004), 100–103 and the notes on 193–216. For this healing practice, see 2 Kings 5:11.

35 See Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* 6:166–68 (*cf.* ibid., 6:211, 214); Roland Deines, "Josephus, Salomo und die von Gott verliehene τέχνη gegen die Dämonen," in Lange et al., *Die Dämonen*, 365–394 (on 367–72); Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: with Latin Text and English Translation*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 82, 187–88.

36 Tobit 8:1–3. Here, too, exorcistic knowledge was brought down from heaven by Tobit's guiding angel. For the text, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003). *Cf.* Beate Ego, "'Denn er liebst sie' (Tob 6,15 MS. 319): Zur Rolle des Dämons Asmodäus in der Tobit-Erzählung," in Lange et al., *Die Dämonen*, 309–17; Yuval Harari, "Tobit, The Book of," in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Tradition*, ed. Raphael Patai and Haya Bar-Itzhak, vol. 2 (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2013), 523–25.

37 See, e.g., John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009), 646–77; Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993). *Cf.* Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1978).

38 Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* 8:45–49. See also Deines, "Josefus"; Dennis C. Duling, "The Elazar Miracle and Solomon's Magical Wisdom in Flavius Josephus's Antiquitates Judaicae 8.42–49," *Harvard Theological Review* 78 (1985): 1–25. The tradition about Solomon prevailing over demons is extensively introduced in the Testament of Solomon. On this work, see Dennis C. Duling, "Testament of Solomon," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 935–87. On this motif and its later occurrences, see Pablo A. Torijano, *Solomon, the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002).

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in their accomplishments. The situation changes dramatically, however, when women enter the scene of ritual power.

3.2 *Angelic Source, Feminine Blame*

The beneficial exorcistic information handed down to Noah was not the only heavenly knowledge that made its way to humanity in that mythic time. Dangerous and distractive knowledge had been brought down even earlier. 1 Enoch (7:1) relates that the angels who descended to earth not only mated with the women but also taught them *ḥarashta* and *kashafta* and the "uprooting of roots and plants."[39] The human context of the angels' sin, then, is tied to two stereotypical feminine sins—harlotry and the performance of *ḥarashim* and *keshafim*. The sexual aspect is also linked in this myth to heavenly knowledge brought down to earth by the angels, who taught the women to adorn themselves and color their eyes. Elsewhere in the book (16:3), the harmful results of this knowledge are clearly manifest. The Book of Enoch, then, explicitly blames women for practicing *ḥarashta* and *kashafta*, linking this accusation to the power of their sexual allure. This is a relatively early example of the hostile portrayal of women's (the "other" gender) menacing power by the threatened masculine gender doing the writing. This version represents an intermediate link in the conjunction of harlotry and *keshafim* assumed in biblical and rabbinic sources.

This trend resonates in Josephus's stories about intrigues and murders in Herod's court. Various women, among them an Arab (who is doubly "other")—"Arabian women are the most expert in *pharmaka* of all women," says Josephus—are mentioned as responsible for concocting and using *pharmaka* for love and murder.[40] We do not know whether these stories had any basis in reality. In any event, the "exposure" of these women's actions and their description by Josephus convey (and intensify) masculine anxiety about feminine power, which is often presented by men as occult, subversive, and dangerous.

Philo of Alexandria also tied women to contemptible acts of this type, but in a different context. In his work *On the Special Laws*, he differentiated between two types of practices. One type is part of a true, venerable secret science by

39 For *ḥarashta* and *kashafta*, see Józef T. Milik, *The Book of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 150, 166. Both etymological roots (*ḥrš, kšf*) are related to the consummation of ritual power. See Michael Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac, 1903), 507, 676–77.

40 Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum*, 1.29.2, 1.30.1; Josepus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, 15:89, 93, 221–29, 16:61–63.

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which the facts of nature are clearly exposed and studied by the most honorable people, foremost among them the Persian Magi. The other is,

> A counterfeit of this, most properly called a perversion of art pursued by charlatan mendicants and parasites, and the basest of the women and slave population who make it their profession to deal with purification and disenchantments and promise with some sort of charms and incantations to turn men's love into deadly enmity and their hatred into profound affection.[41]

These frauds deceive the "simplest and most innocent" people and bring upon them "the worst misfortunes."

Philo, then, distinguishes the honorable "scientific" activity of the Persian Magi from the objectionable practices commonly used in his surroundings by those on the margins of the male intellectual élite to which he belonged and for which he wrote. The latter—"others" in terms of social-status—were presented as charlatans who bring misfortune to their followers. Excluded from access to true knowledge, they were deprived of any real power and their deeds are thus a dangerous deception.

3.3 *Conclusion*

Evidence from the Second Temple period points to an attitude toward *kishuf* in accordance with the biblical one—denoting it as foreign knowledge, tying it to sin, and associating it with feminine power and harlotry. At the same time, it also seems to elevate the value of this knowledge and its concealed power. Contrary to the Bible, which ties forbidden practices for gaining power and knowledge to Gentiles, in Second Temple sources *keshafim* and *ḥarashim* originate in heaven. They were indeed brought down to earth by sin, but were still delivered by angels from the place where all knowledge is true.

The same is true concerning exorcistic-therapeutic knowledge. Although said to have been handed down by angels, it differs from the *keshafim* taught to women by the sinful angels. By contrast, the remedies against the harmful

41 Philo, *Special Laws*, 3:100–101, trans. F.H. Colson, Loeb Classical Library 320 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). On the wisdom of the Persian Magi, see further Philo, *Quod Omnis Probus liber sit*, 74. *Cf.* Apuleius of Madaura, *The Apologia and Florida*, trans. H.E. Butler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 55. On Philo and magic see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 78–80; Torrey Seland, "Philo, Magic, and Balaam: Neglected Aspects of Philo's Exposition of the Balaam Story," in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context* (*Studies in Honor of David E. Aune*), ed. J. Fotopoulos (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), 333–46.

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spirits that emerged from the unclean mating of those angels and women were revealed in a normative pattern: they appear in God's command to Noah, who wrote them down and kept them in a book. Post-biblical writings, then, portray the "right" order of society and the place of knowledge and power within it more explicitly than the Bible, an approach that would become even more prominent in rabbinic writings.

4 Rabbinic Literature

The corpus known as rabbinic literature is varied and extensive, includes many voices and genres, and was developed over centuries by hundreds of rabbis living in two geographic areas—Palestine and Babylonia. The similarities between these regions' rabbis are certainly greater than their differences, yet it is not surprising that the corpus of rabbinic views was diverse on almost every issue, and particularly on the one that concerns me here. In what follows, I will attempt to present the broad range of the rabbis' utterances concerning ritual power—stories, laws, and practical information—placing them in what I hold is their proper political context.[42]

4.1 *The Law on Keshafim: The Deed, the Prohibition, and the Rabbis*

The starting point for the rabbinic legal discussion of *kishuf* was the biblical prohibition against it. The rabbis banned it too, and sentenced anyone engaging in it, man or woman, to death by stoning (mSan 7:4). What was required, however, was a legal definition of the borders of *kishuf* since, at least theoretically, this border marked the difference between life and death. In this context, the Mishnah stated the rule, "He that performs a deed (*ha-ʿoseh maʿaseh*) is liable; he that deceives the eyes (*ha-ʾoḥez ʾet ha-ʿeinayim*) is exempt" (mSan 7:11). The Babylonian Talmud takes a hard line and adds, "exempt but forbidden" (bSan 67b). The basic (and sole!) rule, then, that defines the area under discussion from an emic perspective is the principle of performative efficacy. This principle determines a legal border between conjuring (*ʾaḥizat ʿeinayim*), which is only concerned with the aesthetics of the performance, and *maʿaseh*—an act resulting in transformational changes.[43] Although some rabbis stressed that

42 For detailed considerations of the issues discussed below in brief, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 351–435; Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 353–86.

43 On this distinction, see Philip S. Alexander, "The Talmudic Concept of Conjuring (*Ahizat Einayim*) and the Problem of the Definition of Magic (*Kishuf*)," in *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought*, ed. Rachel Elior and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 7–25. For examples of conjuring, see bSan 67b.

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the human *ma'aseh* is limited (see below), they definitely believed in the power of humans to change the laws of nature and force their will upon them.[44] It is precisely the use of this power, which they labeled *kishuf*, that they negated both in principle and in the law.

Their negation of *kishuf* was driven by both ideological and social motives. The former were formulated explicitly, while the latter are reflected in the traditions dealing with the ability of the rabbis and of others to operate in the world through ritual power, mainly through incantations and holy names. Ideological aspects of the rejection of *kishuf* are clearly evident in such expressions as "Why are they called *keshafim*? Because they deny/narrow (*makḥishin*)[45] the heavenly *familia*" (bSan 67b); or "harlotry and *keshafim* have put an end to everything" (mSotah 9:13). The first saying presents *keshafim* as human defiance of the divine, while the second indicates the unfortunate consequence of this defiance, tying it offhandedly to feminine sexual iniquity. The legal aspect of these determinations, as noted, was the fate of the *mekhashef*, man or woman—death by stoning.[46]

In light of this categorical rejection of *kishuf*, it is interesting to examine the tradition cited below in the name of Abaye in the context of a discussion on *kishuf* and illusion:

> The laws of *keshafim* (*hilkhot keshafim*) are like those of the Sabbath: some [are punished] by stoning, some are exempt yet forbidden, while others are permitted *ab initio*. One who actually performs a deed (*ha-'oseh ma'aseh*)—is stoned; one who creates an illusion—exempt yet forbidden; permitted *ab initio*—such as [was performed by] R. Ḥanina and R. Oshaia. They spent every Sabbath eve studying the laws of creation (*hilkhot yeṣirah*), and a three-year old heifer was created for them and they ate it [bSan 67b].

Abaye, then, distinguishes three sub-groups in the category "laws of *keshafim*": *ma'asim* (deeds), tricks of *'aḥizat 'einayim*, and similar acts that are a priori allowed! These acts, which also appear as *ma'asim*, are illustrated through a story about R. Hanina and R. Oshaya who "were studying" the laws of creation,

44 R. Hanina's approach, stating that since "there is none else beside Him" (meaning that human fate is determined in heaven), we should not fear *keshafim* at all (bSan 67b), is not typical of rabbinic literature. *Cf.*, however, with the opposite attitude, in Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 97–123 (mainly on 97–98).

45 The root *kḥš* has both these denotations and both readings are possible in this context.

46 See mSan 7:4; *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Mishpatim* (ed. Melamed, p. 209); bSan 67a.

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that is, issues related to the secrets of creation. A three-year-old calf was created as a result, which they ate. The use of a passive formulation—"was created"—is not random. The text seeks to void any direct connection between the rabbis engaging in these pursuits and the creation of the calf. Yet, it is also clear that not only did the rabbis have the means to perform a *ma'aseh* (an actual deed and not one of conjuring, as the eating of the calf proves), but that these means were categorically classified as "permitted *a priori*" in the context of the laws of *keshafim*.

This tradition joins other utterances attesting to the rabbis' self-perception as possessing the power to create. R. Joshua, for example, explicitly boasts of his personal ability to do so, "I can take boards and melons and turn them into deer [and] gazelles, and they make deer and gazelles" (ySan 7:11).[47] The potential of the deer and gazelles to give birth, like the rabbis eating the calf, point to the concrete actual result. Rava's position on this count is far-reaching: "If the righteous desired it, they could create a world" (bSan 65b). For this determination, he relies on a story attesting to his own power: "Rava created a man[48] and sent him to R. Zera. He [R. Zera] would speak to him but he [the man-*golem*] would not answer. He [R. Zera] said to him, 'You are from the charmers,[49] return to your dust!'" (bSan 65b).

A more extreme expression of the rabbis' capability to perform a real *ma'aseh* is hard to imagine, yet this is only one of many references to the rabbis' powers cited in rabbinic texts. Rabbis are presented in rabbinic literature as able to cause harm through a curse, slay by words or by a look, send a snake for whose bite there is no cure, make rain or adjust its strength, control the sea, fill a field with cucumbers and gather them through speech, fill a valley with dinars of gold by means of words, kill a snake by merely touching it, raise up

47 References to the Palestinian Talmud are to chapter and mishnah, as noted in *Talmud Yerushalmi According to Ms. Or. 4720 (Scal. 3) of the Leiden University Library with Restorations and Corrections* (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2001).

48 In Aramaic, the sound of this sentence (*Rava bara' gavra'*) is reminiscent of a spell, such as *abra, abra brax, abrasax*, known from Greek magical papyri. See William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey—Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995): 3380–684 (on 3577).

49 I followed Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 429 (*ḥbr'*). An alternative reading of R. Zera's response is: 'You are from the band.' According to this interpretation of the Aramaic *ḥbryy'*, R. Zera not only understands that he is facing a *golem* (that is, an artificial anthropoid) but also ascribes its creation to his colleagues. It is possible, of course, that *ḥbryy'* echoes both these notions.

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dead bodies from the ground, revive the dead, cope with demons, overcome practitioners of *keshafim*, and a great deal more.[50]

The rabbis obviously do not label any of these acts, which undoubtedly belong to the category of *ma'aseh*, as *keshafim*.[51] When distinguishing their own acts from *keshafim*, the rabbis do not rely on any essential phenomenological criteria but merely on the fact that they themselves performed them. As shown below, the root *kšf* was used by the rabbis for the hostile labeling of the "other"—most often women or *minim*.[52] By their very being "us," that is, the focus of legitimate authority and power of the (real or imagined) society represented in their writings, the rabbis' wondrous power was expropriated from the body of *kishuf* and presented as a legitimate or even desirable expression of their intimate relationship with God.[53] The breadth of this power can be gauged from utterances dealing with the rule of the righteous over God, such as "I [God] rule man. Who rules me? The righteous" (bMK 16b); "You have decreed [on earth] below and the Holy One, blessed be He, fulfills your word from above" (bTa'an 23a); "The Holy One, blessed be He, annuls his decree in

50 On the injurious power of the rabbis' gaze, see Tamás S. Turán, "'Whenever the Sages set Their Eyes, There is Either Death or Poverty': On the History, Terminology and Imagery of the Talmudic Traditions about the Devastating Gaze of the Sages," *Sidra* 23 (2008): 137–205 (Hebrew). On rabbis as holy men, see, for example, William S. Green, "Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition," *ANRW* II.19.2 (1979): 619–47; Richard Kalmin, "Holy Men and Rabbis in Late Antiquity," *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2004), 210–32 (Hebrew); David Levine, "Holy Men and Rabbis in Talmudic Antiquity," in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), 45–57; Jacob Neusner, "The Phenomenon of the Rabbi in Late Antiquity," *Numen* 16 (1969): 1–20; Neusner, "The Phenomenon of the Rabbi in Late Antiquity II: The Ritual of 'Being a Rabbi' in Late Sasanian Babylonia," *Numen* 17 (1970): 1–18; Shmuel Safrai, "The Pious (*Hassidim*) and the Men of Deeds," *Zion* 50 (1985): 133–54 (Hebrew). See also the reservations of Hana Safrai and Ze'ev Safrai in idem, "Rabbinic Holy Men," in Poorthuis and Schwartz, *Saints and Role Models*, 59–78.

51 Statements about R. Eliezer's knowledge in *hilkhot qishu'in* (laws of cucumbers) and the story of how he planted a field of cucumbers and gathered them by speech (bSan 68a) appear to be alluding to *keshafim*. The Palestinian Talmud notes that R. Eliezer studied 300 "*hilkhot* (laws of) *mekhashefah*" (ySan7:11).

52 On the rabbis' power against the *minim*, see Gideon Bohak, "Magical Means for Handling *Minim* in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Image of the Judeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature*, ed. Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Petri (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 267–79. The precise denotation of *min* or (pl.) *minim* in rabbinic literature changes from one reference to the other and covers mainly Judeo as well as Gentile Christians and Gnostics. See ibid.

53 See Kimberly B. Stratton, "Imagining Power: Magic, Miracle, and the Social Context of Rabbinic Self-Representation," *JAAR* 73 (2005): 361–93.

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favor of the decree of the righteous" (yTa'an 3:12). As in the Bible stories, here too, this power could, when put to the test, overcome the supernatural power of "others."

4.2 *The Power of the Word*

Language is presented in rabbinic literature as an essential element of ritual-performative activity in two main aspects: the power of the ineffable name and the power of the curse.[54] Many midrashic traditions attest to a notion of tremendous power inherent in the ineffable name, which humans can invoke at will. Several midrashim relate that this name was engraved on Moses' staff and is the reason for its special potency.[55] Another tradition relates that Moses killed the Egyptian who had hit the Hebrew slave through the mention of the ineffable name.[56] According to another midrash, Moses raised Joseph's coffin from the Nile on the eve of the exodus from Egypt by hurling into the river a gold tablet inscribed with the ineffable name.[57] Of David it is told that, when digging the foundations for the Temple, he dammed the *tehom* that threatened to burst forth from the depths of the earth and flood the world by tossing into it a piece of clay bearing the ineffable name (bSuk 53a). Nevertheless, the rabbis' fundamental stance concerning the use of the ineffable name was negative. They forbade it and determined that whoever invokes it has no part in the world to come (mAvot 1:9; AdRN, A, 12).

Cursing by using the ineffable name was also prohibited.[58] Fear of it was great because its power was accessible to anyone who knew the name, from

54 See Hans-Jürgen Becker, "The Magic of the Name and Palestinian Rabbinic Literature," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schäfer, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2002), 391–407; Ludwig Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* (Budapest, 1898), 117–46; Ithamar Gruenwald, "The Letters, the Writing, and the Ineffable Name: Magic, Spirituality and Mysticism," in *Massu'ot: Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. E. Gottlieb*, ed. Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1994), 75–98 (Hebrew); Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 78–103; Urbach, *The Sages*, 124–34.

55 For references, see Urbach, *The Sages*, 125, and n. 10.

56 See Harari, "Moses," 300–301, 311.

57 *Mekhilta de-R. Ishmael*, Vayehi Beshalah, ed. Haim S. Horovitz and Yisrael A. Rabin (Jerusalem: Wahrmann Books, 1970), 78, apparatus—MS München. *Cf.* Pseudo-Jonathan translation of Gen. 50:26 and Ex. 13:19, Ernest G. Clarke, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch: Text and Concordance* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1984), 65, 82.

58 See mSan 7:4, 8; bShev 4:13; bYev 2:5; tMak 5:10. For the prohibition on cursing in the Dead Sea scrolls, see The Rule of the Community col. 7, lines 1–2, James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 30–31.

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priests (yYom 1:1) to Gentiles (yYom 3:8). The rabbis presented their own curse as particularly dangerous—"even when undeserved (or unintended), it comes to pass" (bBer 56a; *cf.* bSan 90b, bMak 11a), though curses by laymen or women should not be taken lightly either. "The curse of a layman should never be belittled by you," warned R. Isaac (bBK 93a). We indeed find two cases illustrating compliance with this injunction, where attempts were made to protect rabbis from the harmful effects of curses that women had made against them. These attempts involved performing actions abiding by the literal wording of the curses in order to preempt the consummation of their malefic intention. Yet, they proved unsuccessful (bGit 35a, bBB 153a).

Fear of curses is one aspect of the general dread of aggressive ritual practices prevalent in late antiquity. Rabbis engaged in such practices but were also, as was everyone, vulnerable to their harm.[59] This type of activity entailed national implications, beyond the personal ones. The rabbis complained that "since *loḥashei leḥishot* [spells whisperers] have increased at the court, acts have become distorted and laws have broken down, and the *Shekhinah* [divine presence] has left Israel" (tSot 14:3. *Cf.* bSot 47b). Precisely this reason—the distortion of justice through magic—may have moved the rabbis to allow the study and teaching of *keshafim*, even though they opposed their use (bShab 75a). Rashi, the distinguished eleventh-century exegete, stated that it was for this reason that R. Johanan claimed that members of the Sanhedrin, the supreme legal body, had to be "masters of *keshafim*" (bSan 17a, bMen 65a).[60]

The rabbis did not entirely refute the professional knowledge used in performative rituals. Part of it, touching on medicine and protection against demons, was authorized in principle and even integrated into the discourse at the house of study. Particularly important in this context is the discussion about the carrying, on the Sabbath, of amulets (sing. *qame'a*) and other objects perceived as helpful for healing. The ruling that allowed one to carry "an expert amulet" on the Sabbath—that is, an amulet whose performative efficacy had

59 See, for example, the story about the student who killed his violent neighbor by hiding a written curse in a pitcher that was buried in a cemetery and blowing a *shofar* over it a thousand times in the course of forty days (bMK 17a–b). Fear of these harmful practices is evident in halakhic discussions recognizing their power to prevent the consummation of the marriage on the wedding night (yKet 1:1) and to compel men to engage in sexual intercourse (yNaz 8:1).

60 In his commentary on bSan 17a, Rashi explains R. Johanan's statement as follows: "[In order] to kill *mekhashefim* [that is, those who perform *keshafim*] who trust their *keshafim* to save them from the court and [in order] to expose the *mekhashefim* who incite and lead astray by their *keshafim*, like Jesus of Nazareth."

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been proven at least three times—attests to the faith in such amulets' healing powers (mShab 6:2; tShab 4:5, 9, 10; bShab 53a, 61a). Similarly, the *tequmah* stone, thought to be useful for preventing miscarriages, could also be carried on the Sabbath (bShab 66b). Using other healing objects on the Sabbath—a grasshopper's egg, the tooth of a fox, and a nail from the gallows of one who was crucified—remained controversial. Faith in their healing powers apparently clashed with their foreign nature (mShab 6:10).

Healing through recourse to this kind of means was also discussed as a matter of principle, and the rabbis were divided here too: R. Akiva and R. Hosea, for example, opposed employing biblical verses for healing (mSan 10:1; bShev 15b). Rava and Abaye supported a more lenient (or pragmatic) view when they determined that "all that pertains to medicine does not pertain to the ways of the Amorite" (bShab 67a), meaning it is not forbidden.[61]

Beside their views in principle, the rabbis included in their study, mainly in the Babylonian Talmud, extensive information on the operation of incantations and rituals for healing purposes.[62] At times, all that was involved was the recitation of a spell, such as the following:

> For *simta* [a skin disease], one should say this: "Baz Bazya, Mas Masya, Kas Kasya, Sharlai, and Amarlai, these are the angels who were sent from the land of Sodom." And to heal boils and ulcers [he should say]: "Bazakh, Bazikh, Bazbazikh, Masmasikh, Kamon, Kamikh, may your appearance [be confined] to you, your appearance [be confined] to you, your place [be confined] to you, your seed be [like that] of a *qalut* and [like that] of a mule that is not fruitful and does not propagate; so [you, the boil] may you not be fruitful nor propagate in the body of NN".[63]

61 On "ways of the Amorite," see below. On the empirical basis of the rabbis' pragmatic approach on healing practices "proved" to be useful, see Giuseppe Veltri, *Magie und Halakha: Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 221–82, 286–93; Veltri, "On the Influence of 'Greek Wisdom': Theoretical and Empirical Sciences in Rabbinic Literature," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 5 (1998): 300–317; Veltri, "The 'Other' Physicians: The Amorites of the Rabbis and the Magi of Pliny," *Korot* 13 (1998–1999): 37–54.

62 See bShab 66b–67a, bGit 68b–89b. *Cf.* Meir Bar-Ilan, "Between Magic and Religion: Sympathetic Magic in the World of the Sages of the Mishnah and Talmud," *The Review of Rabbinic Literature* 5 (2002): 383–99.

63 bShab 67a. These incantations appear close to recipes for exorcising demons, and the skin diseases mentioned in them were apparently perceived as a result of possession by malevolent entities.

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At times, the recommended ritual is more complicated:

> For a daily fever … he should sit at a crossroads and when he sees a big ant carrying something, let him take it and place it within a copper tube, close it [the tube] with lead, seal it with sixty seals, shake it, lift it up, and say to it [to the ant]: "Your burden upon me and my burden upon you".[64]

Beside healing recipes such as these ones, rabbinic writings also provide information on exorcism and protection against demons. In this category, we find specifications of various incantations as well as references to the apotropaic power of Psalms 3, 29, and 91, and of reciting the *Shema* prayer on the bed.[65] Verbal practices for protection against the evil eye are also cited at the house of study (bBer 55b), as is information on self-defense against *keshafim* and *nashim kashfaniyot* (witches). Citing his foster mother, Abaye provides information on the practice of knots (*kesharim*), whose essence is not explicit. According to her, "three [knots] arrest [illness], five cure, seven are efficacious even against *keshafim*" (bShab 66b).[66] Amemar brings to the house of study a spell formula for overcoming *nashim kashfaniyot* given to him by their leader (bPes 110a–b). All this information joins legendary traditions and stories of the rabbis' deeds pointing to their power to beat demons and "other" agents of supernatural power through rituals and incantations (below). Together, these sources reflect a discourse of power and authority entwined with a great deal of legitimate practical knowledge that, in the house of study, became part of the curriculum.

64 bShab 66b. See more recipes there, among them the one for protection and strengthening during a high fever, which includes a *historiola* about the burning bush that is not consumed. On this tradition, see Gideon Bohak, "Jewish Myth in Pagan Magic in Antiquity," in *Myths in Judaism: History, Thought, Literature*, ed. Ithamar Gruenwald and Moshe Idel (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2004), 97–122 (Hebrew) (on 117–20). On the *historiola* in the magical practice of late antiquity, see David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 457–76.

65 On incantations, see, for example, bShab 67a, bPes 110a. On Psalms, see bShev 15b, bPes 112a. On *Shema* prayer on the bed, see bBer 5a.

66 *Cf.* Rebecca M. Lesses, "Exe(o)rcising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists, and Demonesses in Babylonian Jewish Society of Late Antiquity," *JAAR* 69 (2001): 343–75 (on 362–64).

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4.3 *Alien Practices, "Other" Agents*

A pivotal expression in the rabbinic discourse on the ritual practices discussed here is "ways of the Amorites" (*darkey ha-'emori*).[67] This term indicates practices forbidden by the biblical injunction against following the ways of the nations (Lev. 18:3). These ways, as shown, were explicitly connected in the Bible to practices of paranormal knowledge and power, and were forbidden because they were alien. The rabbis used the term "ways of the Amorites" precisely in this sense, applying it to depict a border line between forbidden and allowed that relied on an ideological stance. As is true of *kishuf*, the category of Ways of the Amorites does not offer a comprehensive definition of the types of acts defined by it, and the rabbis employ it to forbid or permit particular acts—most of them, but not all, ritual practices of the type discussed here.

In the Mishnah, the controversy over the use of various apotropaic objects (a grasshopper's egg, the tooth of a fox, a nail of the gallows from one who was crucified) as well as the ritual-performative use of a cow's afterbirth (burying it at a crossroads or hanging it on a tree) is tied to the question of whether these deeds are in the category of "ways of the Amorites" (mShab 6:10; mHul 4:7). The Tosefta makes double use of this category. On the one hand, it uses it to label ritual (and other) acts as forbidden, as in the following:

> He who ties a pad onto his thigh and a red thread on his finger … he who pours out water onto the street and says *ḥada* … he who throws a piece of iron between graves and says *ḥada* … she who shouts at an oven not to let the bread fall, she who puts chips into the handle of a pot that it should not boil over … he who says *dagan qardan* … he who says *dani dano* … these are ways of the Amorites.
>
> tShab 7:6

On the other hand, the Tosefta uses the Ways of the Amorites rubric to authorize and permit acts that seem to belong to the forbidden ritual category but do not (tShab 7, tShevi 1:10). Later sources also use this category as a means for determining the place of specific acts within or beyond the boundaries

67 See Yitzhak Avishur, "'The Ways of the Amorite': The Canaanite-Babylonian background and the Literary Structure," in *Studies in the Bible and the Hebrew Language Offered to Meir Wallenstein on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Chaim Rabin et al. (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1979), 17–47 (Hebrew); Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 382–84; Harari, *Jewish Magic*, 368–72; Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Tosefta*, vol. 3, Shabbat (Jerusalem: JTSA, 1992), 79–105 (Hebrew); Veltri, *Magie und Halakha*, 93–220. On the Amorites as dangerous enchanters, see 2 Baruch 60:1.

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of normative behavior.[68] Pragmatic considerations related to the efficacy of these acts, however, are not considered essential. The rabbis appeared to have used the category of Ways of the Amorites to push beyond the normative pale "other" performative practices that must have been widespread in their communities, replacing them with practices that they themselves had instituted (study, prayer, righteousness), which were also perceived as imbued with performative power.[69]

The rabbis endorsed a similar approach, even more forcefully, against "other" agents of supernatural powers who did not belong to their own circle. Prominent aspects of this approach include the denial of these agents' power to perform a real deed (*ma'aseh*) and presenting them as conjurers, refuting an available practice on ideological grounds, and presenting these agents' performative faculties as inferior to their own.

One instance of the first aspect is the discussion of Jannai's testimony regarding "one heretic (*min*) who would take a bundle and toss it up and it would land and turn into a calf" (ySan 7:11). As proof against the very feasibility of such "creation" by non-Jews, the rabbis cite R. Elazar in the name of R. Yosi b. Zimra: "Were all the world's creatures to gather together, they could not create one fly and place a soul in it" (ibid.).[70] Summing up, they determine, "[Surely] it does not say [that] he took a kind of bundle, tossed it up in the air and it landed and became a calf, but that he called upon a trickster who stole a calf from the herd and then brought it to him." Another testimony on "creation" of this type by Gentiles, also cited there, concludes with a clarification stating that, in principle, "If you have eaten from it—that is a proof [that a real act has indeed been carried out], and if not—it is a deception (*'aḥizat 'einayim*)."[71]

The second aspect—refuting use of an available practice—is conveyed in two stories about R. Ishmael and R. Joshua ben Levi, who preferred their loved ones to die if the alternative was healing them in the name of Jesus. The first story appears close to a detailed discussion on the need to minimize contact

68 See the references in Harari, "The Sages and the Occult," in *The Literature of the Sages: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Language of Rabbinic Literature*, vol. II/3b, ed. Joshua Schwartz, Peter Tomson and Zeev Safrai (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 528, n. 27.

69 Beside negating and removing "other" practices, the rabbis tried to "convert" others and legitimize them by casting them in a Jewish light. See Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Life and Manners of Jewish Palestine in the II–IV Centuries C.E.* (New York: JTSA, 1942), 102–103.

70 *Cf.* AdRN, A, 12; GenR 39:14, 84:4; Sifrei on Deut 32; Midrash Tannaim on Deut 6:5; PesR 43.

71 In this context, the noted Babylonian tradition about the three-year old calf that was created as a result of the rabbis' study of the laws of creation, which they ate, assumes its full meaning.

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with heretics (*minim*), which ends with the admonition, "You shall seek neither financial nor medical assistance from them" (tHul 2:21). In this story, R. Ishmael welcomes the death of R. Eleazar ben Damah from a snake bite rather than obtaining help from a healer who had wished to treat him by invoking the name of Jesus, since death saved him from infringing the rabbis' ruling (tHul 2:22–23. *Cf.* yAZ 2:2). In the second story, R. Joshua ben Levi objects to the healing of his grandson through the invocation of Jesus' name. He determines it would be better for his grandson to die, as it indeed came to pass (yShab 14:4; yAZ 2:2).

These two Palestinian traditions clearly reflect the rabbis' fear of Christian agents of supernatural power entering the Jewish domain. In these stories, the ideological and social struggles between the two religious currents are conveyed in the extreme context of life and death in general, and in that of their agents' power to heal and to kill with words in particular. In both stories, the rabbis intervene at their own initiative in the healing procedures and, consequently, the patients die. In one case, however, death results from preventing the Christian healing act, while in the other, the words of the rabbi (R. Joshua ben Levi), even though uttered as it were incidentally and without performative intent, override the deliberate Christian healing force and annul it. This is a good example of the connection the rabbis wished to establish between their religious-ideological stance and its political aspect—the power advantage of the rabbis as representatives of this "truth" over that of agents of the competing ideology.

This aspect of the rabbis' attitude toward the supernatural power of the Other is even more explicit in a story about a struggle between R. Joshua and a heretic, which began in a bathhouse in Tiberias and ended in the depths of the Sea of Galilee:

> R. Eliezer, R. Joshua, and R. Aqiva went in to bathe in the bathhouse of Tiberias. A *min* [heretic] saw them. He said what he said and they were caught in the dome [of the bathhouse].[72] Said R. Eliezer to R. Joshua: "Now Joshua b. Ḥanina, see what you [can] do." When that *min* went out, R. Joshua said what he said and the doorway held him [the *min*], so that whoever went in would give him a punch and whoever went out would give him a push. He said to them: "Undo what you have done." They said to him: "Release us, and we shall release you." They released one another.

72 For the magical denotation of the idiom "he said what he said," see Daniel Sperber, "On a Meaning of the Word מלה," in Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1994), 60–66.

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> Once they came out, R. Joshua said to that *min*: "Is that [all] you know?" Said he [the *min*]: "Let's go down to the sea." When they got down to the sea, that *min* said what he said and the sea split open. He said to them: "Is this not what Moses, your rabbi, did at the sea?" They said to him: "Will you not concede to us that Moses, our rabbi, walked through it?" He said to them: "Yes." They said to him: "[Then] you walk through it." He walked through it. R. Joshua issued a decree to the prince of the sea, who swallowed him up.[73]

This story is a well-constructed literary expression of the trend seeking to present the rabbi as able to overcome the *min*'s power through the same means that the *min* has used against him. Each of them says something that restricts the other and, although they cannot defeat one another, the rabbi still wins through a combination of ritual power and of a ruse that ends with the death of the "other," the aggressor. This tradition, then, does not deny that supernatural power can be found outside rabbinic circles. Yet, the very acknowledgement of this power or, more precisely, the mode chosen to report this acknowledgement, undermines this power by presenting it as aggressive and dangerous on the one hand, and as defeated by rabbis on the other.

In this report of the power of the Other, the rabbis sought to remove from the social arena any competing agents of performative ritual power (and in the case of the heretics, also of other "truths" in whose name they operated), thereby promoting their own status as the sole legitimate agents of such power.[74] This aim is particularly typical of traditions about women known as *kashfaniyot.*

Concerning both *minim* and women, the rabbis struggled against factors that, in their view, were an external threat to the community they wished to lead and to the social order they wished to establish in it. Whereas the heretics were ideological-religious outsiders, women were gendered (and social) outsiders, whose marginality cut across ideological-religious differences. In the perception of women and of femininity dominant in the patriarchal structure

73 ySan 7:11. On this story, see Martin Jacobs, "Römische Thermenkultur im Spiegel des Talmud Yerushalmi," in Schäfer, *The Talmud Yerushalmi*, vol. 1, 219–311 (on 298–303); Joshua Levinson, "Enchanting Rabbis: Contest Narratives between Rabbis and Magicians in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," *Tarbiz* 75 (2006): 295–328 (on 298–303) (Hebrew).

74 In this context, the statement that the books of the *minim* are books of *qosmin* (from the root *qsm*, denoting the field of divination and wizardry) is also of interest (tHul 2:20).

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that rabbinic literature presents and represents women can seem even more complex and threatening than *minim*.[75]

The traditions linking women to *kishuf* and *kishuf* to femininity split roughly into two: sayings and stories. The sayings attest to an entrenched perception that continues, and even radicalizes, positions already present in the Bible and in the Apocrypha, without exempting any woman from it. An early and terse formulation appears in Hillel's words in the Mishnah, "The more women—the more *keshafim*" (mAvot 2:7). This same connection, but in reverse, is found in the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai* (Epstein-Melamed, 209), stating that "most *keshafim* are [found] among women." The Talmuds, mainly the Babylonian, offer several versions of this notion. Some attribute *kishuf* to women in general and some focus on Jewish women. For example, "most women engage in *keshafim*" (bSan 67a); "the most sinless among women performs *keshafim*" (yKid 4:11); "the daughters of Israel use incense for *keshafim*" (bBer 53a), and "the daughters of Israel indulge in *keshafim*" (bEr 64b). In one mention, *kishuf* is specifically linked to old women, in a distinct context of loss of fertility (and with it, also the potential for sexual sin):

> A daughter is a vain treasure to her father who, fearful for her, will not sleep at night—as a child lest she be seduced, as a young girl lest she engage in forbidden relations, as a grownup lest she not marry, if she marries lest she bear no children, if she grows old, lest she engage in *keshafim*.[76]

Other traditions regarding women who are *kashfaniyot* intensify the suspicion of *kishuf* concerning every woman.

The talmudic stories reinforce this impression when they anchor it in concrete events, with well-known figures as protagonists. This approach is conveyed in concise narratives, such as the story about the woman who tried

75 On the perception of women as *mekhashefot* in rabbinic literature, see Meir Bar-Ilan, "Witches in the Bible and in the Talmud," *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* NS 5 (1993): 7–32; Simcha Fishbane, "'Most Women Engage in Sorcery': An Analysis of Sorceresses in the Babylonian Talmud," *Jewish History* 7 (1993): 27–42; Tal Ilan, "'You Shall Not Suffer a Witch to Live': Witches in Ancient Jewish History," in Ilan, *Silencing the Queen: The Literary History of Shelamzion and Other Jewish Women* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 214–41; Jonathan Seidel, "'Release Us and We Will Release You!': Rabbinic Encounters with Witches and Witchcraft," *Journal of the Association of Graduates in Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1992): 45–61; Kimberly B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology and Stereotype in the Ancient World*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 143–76.

76 bSan 100b. On this and other misogynistic quotes from Ben Sira in the Talmud, see Tal Ilan, "Ben Sira's Attitude to Women and its Reception by the Babylonian Talmud," *Jewish Studies* 40 (2000): 103–11 (Hebrew).

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to take earth from under R. Hanina's feet and use it to harm him (bSan 67b), or that about a woman who wanted to sail in the boat of R. Hisda and R. Huna and, when they refused to take her with them, "she uttered a word—and bound the boat; they uttered a word—and released it" (bShab 81, bHul 105b). It is also found in more elaborate stories, such as that of Jannai in an inn:

> Jannai came to an inn. He said to them: "Give me water to drink." They brought him *shattitha* [a kind of porridge]. He saw that her [the innkeeper's] lips were moving. He spilled some of it [of the *shattitha*], which turned into scorpions. He said to them: "I have drunk of yours, you too drink of mine." He gave her to drink and she turned into an ass. He rode on her to the market. Her friend came and broke the spell. He was seen riding a woman in the market.[77]

Even more elaborate and graphic is the story about R. Joshua, R. Eliezer, and Rabban Gamliel. They arrived in Rome and were asked by a local Jew in whose home they were staying to pray for his son, who had no children. R. Joshua took flax seeds, "planted" them on a marble tablet, moistened them, and made them sprout. He seized them, pulled them, and drew out of the tablet, by the hair, the woman who had bound the host's son. He then demanded that she rescind the act she had performed. Pressured by the threat that they would expose her deeds in public, she revealed that she had thrown "them"—the "deeds" by which she had bound the son—into the sea. R. Joshua then issued a decree to the prince of the sea, who ejected the "deeds" on to dry land, where their power is revoked (ySan 7:11).[78] The message is the same in all these stories: feminine power is subversive and destructive, and the rabbis' power prevails over it.

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77 bSan 67b. On the fear of harm through *keshafim* at an inn, see also bPes 110b, bSan 101a. As claimed in Daniel Sperber, *The City in Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 15–17, inns were also tied to harlotry, and the link between *keshafim* and harlotry is also at the background in these stories.

78 Although it is not explicitly stated that the power of the deeds is canceled, this is made clear by the fact that only at this point do the rabbis turn to pray for the son. For harmful practices of ritual power in the Greco-Roman world, including sexual binding, see Gager, *Curse Tablets*. For the phenomenon in early Jewish magic, see Yuval Harari, "If You Wish to Kill a Person: Harmful Magic and Protection from it in Early Jewish Magic," *Jewish Studies* 37 (1997): 111–42 (Hebrew). For the legalistic aspect of sorcery in the Roman world, see Hans G. Kippenberg, "Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Ritual Could Be Illegal," in *Envisioning Magic*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 137–63; Ramsay McMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 127–95.

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To view these traditions as a reflection of a widespread feminine activity whose purpose is to harm men through the use of ritual power would be mistaken. Accusations of *keshafim* attest less to their actual use than to fear of the "other" to whom these actions are ascribed, symbolizing its power to cause harm and damage. No wonder, then, that this activity is ascribed to women who are not closely supervised by men (old), to those in the public space (the inn), and even worse—to those who act in concert.

Some traditions point to male fears of organized female *kishuf*, an option that is invariably tied to some explicit saying about its defeat. In one place, the Talmud gives specific instructions, including an incantation to be recited when a man who has to pass a crossroads sees two women sitting on both sides of the road (hence suspected of performing *keshafim*—bPes 111a). Amemar gives the wording of an incantation that will overcome *kashfaniyot* (witches) a man may encounter on his way that, so he says, was told to him by their leader (bPes 110a–b). This tradition thus reveals a particularly threatening notion about an organized body of women who practice *keshafim* that, in the context of the discourse at the house of study, was tied to information exchanged among males on how to defeat it.

Finally, the well-known story about the ruse that R. Shimon b. Shetah used to kill "eighty women *mekhashefot* in a cave in Ashkelon [who were] destroying the world," should be mentioned. The danger to "the world" (the entire world? the patriarchal order?) posed by the very existence of such a concentration of female ritual power, is conveyed at the beginning of the story as a basis for justifying its end.

> Forthwith Shimon b. Shetah stood up on a stormy day and took with him eighty young men. He gave them eighty clean cloaks and they put them in eighty new pots, which they turned over. He said to them: "When I whistle once, put on your garments. When I whistle a second time, all of you come in at once. And as you come in, each one of you will lift up one of them and hold her off the ground, for if you hold a charmer (*mekhashef*) off the ground he is incapable of doing anything." He went and stood at the mouth of the cave and said: "*Oyim, oyim*! Open up for me. I am one of yours." They said to him: "How did you come here on such a day?" He replied: "I walked between the raindrops." They said to him: "And what did you come to do here?" He said: "To learn and to teach; let each one come and do what he knows." And so it was. One said what she said and brought bread [by means of the incantation]. One said what she said and brought meat. [Yet another] said what she said and brought cooked food. [And one] said what she said and brought wine. They said to him: "And what can you do?" He said to them: "I can

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> whistle twice and bring to you eighty young men. They will have pleasure with you and give pleasure to you." They said to him: "Yes, we want." He whistled once and the [men outside] put on their clothes. He whistled a second time and they all came in at once. He said: "Let each one of you know a partner." They loaded them [on their backs], and they went, and they crucified them.[79]

R. Shimon b. Shetah, the head of the Sanhedrin, overwhelms the women through a ploy combining cunning, discipline, physical power, and theoretical knowledge about the nature of *mekhashfim*: separating them from the ground annuls their powers. The masculine paramilitary campaign of a disciplined unit of Torah scholars under the command of Shimon b. Shetah ends with the rabbis' total victory.[80]

The literary death of imagined rivals—in terms of ideology or gender—endowed with ritual power, marks the height of a trend seeking to push this power beyond the margins of Jewish society if wielded by illegitimate agents. This is the imagined fulfillment of the biblical command "You shall not let a *mekhashefah* live" and of its talmudic interpretation, "this applies to both man and woman" (bSan 67a), both within and outside communal contexts. Paranormal power is not thereby absolutely excluded from Jewish society. Indeed, the opposite is true: its presence is repeatedly illustrated by the rabbis themselves. Objecting to this power, therefore, is not the main goal of these stories but merely a by-product of *the* fundamental aim: marginalizing "other" agents of such power and clearing them from the public space, replacing them with the rabbis.[81]

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79 yHag 2:2; *cf.* ySan 6:4. The Hebrew root *yd'* has two denotations: to know and to have intercourse. R. Shimon uses this duality when addressing the two audiences in the cave—the young men and the witches.

80 On this story, see Abraham Amir, "Shimon ben Shatah and the Sorceresses," *Sinai* 112 (1993): 144–61 (Hebrew); Ilan, "'You shall not suffer a witch to live'"; Martin Hengel, *Rabbinische Legende und frühpharisäische Geschichte: Schimeon b. Schatach und die achtzig Hexen von Askalon* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1984); Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*, trans. Jacqueline Teitelbaum (Bloomington, ID: Indiana University Press, 1999), 156–57.

81 The rabbis' political interest in objecting to anyone but themselves wielding supernatural powers is evident in the talmudic story about R. Katina and an osteo-necromancer (bBer 59a). The editor explicitly notes that the necromancer did possess true knowledge and "the reason he [R. Katina] did not admit this to him was to prevent others from being led astray by him." On the relationship between knowledge, truth, and magic in the rabbinic context, see Jacob Neusner, "Science and Magic, Miracle and Magic in Formative Judaism: The System and the Difference," in *Religion, Science, and Magic in Concert and in Conflict*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernst S. Frerichs and Paul V.M. Flesher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 61–81.

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4.4 *Conclusion*

Belief in the power of ritual practices to effect transformational change was prevalent within the Jewish people from the very beginning, as recorded in the Bible. Its expressions, however, as reviewed in this chapter, were invariably mediated by some establishment strong enough to produce texts, confer upon them the authority of "truth," and bequeath them to the following generations. This authority that, in turn, delegated advantages and power to the establishment generating these writings, was threatened by alternative agents of knowledge and power who had to be removed and placed beyond the legitimate borders of society and culture. The root *kšf*, in all its derivatives (*kishuf, keshafim, mekhashef, mekhashefah, kashfanit*), was a significant rhetorical device in the attempt to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate. From the mishnaic era onward, the "ways of the Amorite" notion also served this purpose, resting the distinction between forbidden and allowed on the ethnic source of the practice. The line differentiating "us" from "them," that sets the ideological border between truth and lie, marks the distinction in the realm of action as well. Thus, "we" never use *keshafim*—only they do, the "others." Obviously, the implication is not that "our" truth is powerless. Just the opposite! The representatives of our truth are more powerful that the "others" and defeat them (as well as the ideological alternative they speak for). Yet, by definition, since it is ours, this truth is not considered *kishuf.* Hence, although Moses and Aaron overcome the Egyptian *mekhashfim* and *ḥartumim*, they did not perform *keshafim* and the Bible painstakingly and repeatedly emphasizes God's role in their wondrous acts. In other instances, however, and more prominently in stories about other prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, this trend fades and disappears. They seem to operate with what often appears as a personal, charismatic power that does not rely on direct divine assistance. In any event, since the knowledge they possess is the "truth"—the ideology of the biblical "us"—their power is never considered *kishuf.*

The Apocrypha develops this stance in theoretical terms as well. On the one hand, it anchors knowledge of *ḥarashim* and *keshafim* in heaven, thereby conveying explicit recognition of its truth and its latent practical potential. On the other, it ties this knowledge's presence on earth to the angels' sin and to the iniquity of their mating with women. Human *kishuf* is thus presented as fundamentally negative and feminine. The link already present in the Bible between a female physical and spiritual sin, between harlotry and *kishuf*, is even stronger in the story of the angels' transgression in the book of Enoch. Above all, we appear to be witnessing here the symbolization of men's fear of women's personal and gender power, which men submit to and depend upon. The existential collective dependence on women on the one hand, and the sexual temptation tied to women on the other, were tied together in male

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consciousness in a mode that evokes fear of women's "mysterious" power. This power, whose uncontrolled use by women traditionally led to severe sanctions against them, is connected to a broader, more threatening and more mysterious power—*kishuf.*

This trend was developed more elaborately and explicitly in misogynistic sayings and stories, in rabbinic literature in general and in the Babylonian Talmud in particular. Women are presented in this context as a particularly dangerous Other. While the *minim* represent a different ideology and exercise their power in its name and in its service, the power of women does not rely on an alternative ideology but on a different human status (i.e. gender). As it were, beside the open threats from the outside, an alternative power network was spread within the (patriarchal) society—an open, female network of hidden power that should be suspected and suppressed. Although women were not the only ones suspected of *kishuf*, they were the ones most identified with it. Overcoming them and their supernatural power would, it was felt, bolster the patriarchal social order headed by the rabbis. Power should always be held by the legitimate agents of the "truth" and, in rabbinic literature, these agents are the rabbis. No wonder, then, that they are depicted in this literature, for which they are responsible, as possessing impressive paranormal abilities. Their power, however, is by no means *kishuf*—not due to any essential difference between the practices they resorted to and those used by others who were accused of *keshafim*, or to the (malefic or beneficial) nature of the results, or to their performance in a different ideological context regarding the limitations of human power in the world. Exercising this power is not *kishuf* because it is the rabbis who perform it. We therefore find in rabbinic literature, simultaneously, (1) a basic belief in the performative potential of the human "deed" (*ma'aseh*), which effects transformational change in the world and is *kishuf*, (2) a prohibition against its performance because it is idolatry or defiance of heaven, and (3) stories about the rabbis' power to operate precisely in this way, that is, to perform a *ma'aseh*. These stories bear a double message: they attest to the power of the rabbis, which reaches as far as the power to create, and they demonstrate their advantage vis-à-vis alternative agents of ritual power, whose very existence in the realm of Jewish culture posed a threat to the social order that the rabbis sought to establish and lead.

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER 9

Rome and the Roman Empire

Magali Bailliot

According to ancient Roman authors, there was a large number of formulas or gestures (enchantments, remedies, predictions, amulets) capable of modifying the natural course of events, in both a positive and a negative sense.[1] In general, however, writers emphasized the incompetence and harmfulness of these acts. Although the legal sources (the *Twelve Tables*, the *Lex Cornelia* and their late commentaries) echo the state of mind of an élite concerned to maintain its dominant position and social stability,[2] the rituals and beliefs remain ambiguous, between credulity and skepticism, between condemnation, integration, and tolerance. When Pliny manifests his distrust toward Greek medicine, he highlights traditional medicines, although distancing himself from them: "It takes a bold man to believe that Nature obeys ritual words [*sacra*] and equally it takes a dull man to deny that ritual words have beneficent powers."[3] Although, according to Columella, traditional remedies pertain to a "perversion of coarse minds," he himself was the author of a treatise on astrology.[4]

It has also been observed that the laws did not condemn these practices directly.[5] Detailed analysis of certain rituals (formula, gestures, images, objects …), for its part, has shown that they were anchored in traditions recognized by all, and that they were ruled by the same conceptual universe as that of public cult. This ambiguity could only frustrate the distinction gradually established between good and bad piety—that is, "superstition," with its deviant, exaggerated rituals carried out ill-advisedly.[6] Consequently, this essay proposes to observe the evolution of the juridical gaze cast on these practices,

1 This chapter was translated from the French by Michael Chase.

2 Richard Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 163.

3 Pliny, *Natural History*, 2, 140–141, ed. and trans. H. Rackham, *Natural History, Volume I: Books 1–2*, Loeb Classical Library 330 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), translation modified.

4 Columella, *Rural economy*, 11,1.

5 James B. Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables Revisited," *Classical Quarterly* 52 (2002): 270–90.

6 John Scheid, *Quand faire, c'est croire. Les rites sacrificiels des Romains* (Paris: Aubier, 2005), 125: "The analysis of 'magical' procedures reveals the same ritual conditions as the public cults. However, in conformity with the celebrants' particular objective (or what was assumed

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and to analyze some terms and symbols peculiar to them. On the basis of their ambiguity, we shall try to envisage ways they took advantage of religious and collective rules and how they were able to respond to crisis situations.

1 Legal Avenues in Response to Spells

1.1 *The* Twelve Tables: *Justice against Enchantments*

Only a few quotations and paraphrases have come down to us from the *Twelve Tables*, which constitute the first corpus of private law in ancient Rome. Among the sections that have been restored, two allude to the power of the *malum carmen*: that is, a song or rhythmic formula that produces a negative effect on someone or something. These are the first judicial responses to spells, yet for some time their interpretation has presented problems. They are known only through indirect, later sources that are more representative of the viewpoint and mentality of their commentators than of the reality of their time.[7]

According to Pliny, the law concerned "the person who makes away with someone else's crops and formulates an evil incantation against the harvest,"[8] while according to Seneca the legislator mentioned "he who, by means of spells, makes away with a neighbor's crops."[9]

The meaning of *qui malum carmen incantassit* is associated with a quite wide set of practices. Derived from the verb *canere*, the noun *carmen*, which is attested from the *Twelve Tables* down to Isidore of Seville, referred to oracular formulas, prayers and precepts as well as to the texts of laws. The *carmen* conveyed the idea of a rhythmic formula as opposed to prose, whose contents must not be changed under any circumstances in order to preserve its value. In literature, it refers to songs (vocal or instrumental) and to poetic compositions.[10]

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to be so), these behaviours are secret, inverted, and displaced. It was a mistake to follow the Ancients in establishing a difference between good piety, measured and benevolent, and bad piety, or superstition, celebrating the same rituals in an exaggerated way, with the intention of committing evil and dominating other citizens, and even the gods."

7 Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables," 273.

8 Pliny, *Natural History*, 28, 17: *Quid? Non et legum ipsarum in XII Tabulis verba sunt: qui fruges excantassit, et alibi : qui malum carmen incantassit*.

9 Seneca, *Natural Questions*, 4, 7, 2, translation based on that of M. Nisard (Paris: Dubochet, 1844): *Ne quis alienos fructus excantassit*.

10 Charles Guittard, "*Carmen* et *carmenta* chant, Prière et prophétie dans la religion romaine," in *Chanter les dieux : Musique et religion dans l'antiquité grecque et romaine. Actes du colloque* (*Rennes-Lorient, 16–18 décembre 1999*), ed. Pierre Brulé and Christophe Vendries, (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2001), 173–81.

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Also derived from *cano, incantare* means 'to sing.'[11] Accompanied by *carmen* and associated with *malum* it conveys the idea of "harmful sung charm." By itself, however, *incantare* does not imply an evil intention. This is indicated by *cantio* in Cato, who uses it to designate a formula supposed to cure dislocations: "If a dislocation occurs, it will be cured by this incantation."[12] In the form *excantare*, by contrast, it reveals a more precise meaning: "to make other peoples' crops disappear and transfer them to one's benefit by use of a song or a charm."[13] Virgil uses it of the enchanter Moeris in the eighth *Bucolic*: "I have seen him transplant harvests from one field to another."[14] Although it refers to the clause from the *Twelve Tables*, this passage seems to correspond rather to a literary theme that leaves the reader free to draw—or not—from the collective imagination. Moeris—who can transform himself into a werewolf and also bears a name that signifies Μοῖρις in Greek and *Moira* ("destiny") in Latin—does not necessarily believe in the reality of incantatory powers. This, however, is what Servius implies with regard to the *Bucolics*, when he associates the enchanter's agrarian exploits with the *Twelve Tables*: "to transport harvests—this was done by *magia*, which is why one reads in a law of the *Twelve Tables*: 'Do not cast a spell on someone else's harvests.'"[15]

One may be surprised that the removal of crops by *carmina* was even addressed in the *Twelve Tables*, even while other beliefs that are well attested, such as the dangers of the evil eye, do not receive the same attention. Yet the consequences of other acts and practices were just as serious. For instance, Pliny reports that people with certain powers of *fascinans* could kill those against whom they focused their gazes angrily.[16] Virgil, too, evokes this belief

11 A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine, Histoire des Mots* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1935), 145.

12 Cato, *On agriculture*, 168, 160, 1, translation based on that of Raoul Goujard (Paris: Collection Budé, 1975, 2002): *Luxum si quod est, hac cantione sanum fiet*.

13 Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables," 274. Scholars long juxtaposed the testimony from Pliny (*Natural History*, 28, 2, 10) to Cicero's interpretation (*De Republica*, 4, 10, 12), in the belief that the latter, taken up by St. Augustine (*City of God*, 2, 9), recognized in the law of the Twelve Tables a condemnation of insulting poems, that is, calumny. However, rather than commenting on *excantare*, Cicero focuses on the verb *occentare.* If the former verb reported by Pliny refers to a *malum carmen*, the latter refers to the *carmen famosum* which designated a slanderous lampoon. In this sense, these two versions cannot be opposed, for they present two different offenses. (Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables," 279–288).

14 Virgil, *Bucolics*, 8, 99, translation based on that of M. Nisard (Paris: Didot, 1850): *Atque satas alio vidi traducere messis*.

15 *Commentaries on Virgil's Eclogues*, 8, 99, ed. Georgias Thilo (Leipzig: Teubner, 1881): *Traducere messes: magicis quibusdam artibus hoc fiebat, unde est in XII tabulis: neve alienam segetem pellexeris*.

16 Pliny, *Natural History*, 7, 2, 8.

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when he depicts a shepherd deploring the loss of his livestock, caused (he claims) by a harmful glance.[17]

Another popular fear concerned the devious manipulation of spindles. Pliny mentions that "a country rule observed on most Italian farms forbids women to twirl their spindles while walking along the road, or even to carry them uncovered, on the ground that such action blights the hopes of everything, especially the hope of a good harvest."[18] In his 1935 study *Notes on Antique Folklore*, X.F. Wolters suggested two interpretations of this law. First, it reflected a taboo concerning the spindle, because, like the spinning *Iynx* of the sorceresses of Greco-Roman literature, it prevented (by force of analogy) wheat from growing straight. It also might have served to avert the danger caused by women who resembled the Parcae.[19] The parallel with the *Iynx* hardly seems convincing (while in contrast, a link between spindle and *fatum*—as in the name Moeris—is more compelling). This rural taboo seems primarily to pertain to women's responsibilities, as dictated by the customs of an agrarian society and its religious traditions. In this regard, J. Gagé has pointed out the crucial role of women in producing particular orders of births, which related to crops through the warnings of *prodigia*. "Roman religious psychology," Gagé observed, "generally sensitive as it was to warnings by *prodigia*, was especially sensitive to those [prodigies] that seemed to indicate an offense or pollution by women."[20]

It has often been thought that the *Twelve Tables*, like the taboo against the spindle, constituted anti-sorcery laws in the modern sense of the term, even though this concept was not formulated as such at the time. Premature comparisons, like those of Wolters (above), tend to overestimate the procedure, rather than its goal. J.B. Rives has more helpfully observed that the *Twelve Tables* were aimed primarily at theft, not at enchantment.[21] Like Richard

17 Virgil, *Bucolics*, 3, 103.

18 Pliny, *Natural History*, 28, 28, trans. W.H.S. Jones. Loeb Classical Library 418 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963): *Pagana lege in plerisque Italiae praediis cauetur ne mulieres per itinera ambulantes torqueant fusos aut omnino detectos ferant, quoniam adversetur id omnium spei, praecipue frugum*.

19 Xavier François Marie Gérard Wolters, *Notes on Antique Folklore on the Basis of Pliny's Natural History L. XXVIII. 22–29* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1935), 50–55; 122–126. In Catullus, the use of the spindle occurs only as a refrain in the composition of the *carmen* ("Run, guiding the threads from beneath, run, O spindles": *Currite ducentes subtegmina, currite fusi*) which refers to the Parcae (Catullus, *Poetry*, 64, 323–381, ed. Maurice Rat (Paris: 1931)). The comparison with the Iynx (and its humming) manipulated by Simaitha in Theocritus is only stylistic in nature. Further on the *Iynx* see Johnston, Chap. 26, below.

20 Jean Gagé, *Matronalia: Essai sur la dévotion et les organisations cultuelles des femmes dans l'ancienne Rome*, Collection Latomus 60, (Brussels: Latomus, 1963), 144.

21 Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables," 278.

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Gordon and Fritz Graf, Rives has emphasized the agrarian character of Roman society at the time, and all that was at stake in the wealth of the land and the tensions it could provoke, especially in times of crisis. In fact, the *Twelve Tables* uniquely enabled the legislator to channel the tensions and beliefs that would have permeated an agrarian society at the mercy of calamities and neighborhood conflicts. Nevertheless, if the redactors of the *Twelve Tables* gave priority to property rights, they did not call beliefs about the Evil Eye or about *Carmina mala* into question. It was not a question of *carmina*, but rather of opening the door for claims, whatever the litigants' beliefs may have been.

The particular focus of this legislation is demonstrated by the trial of Furius Cresimus, which took place more than two centuries after the redaction of the *Twelve Tables*. When landowners noticed that their crops yielded less than those of their neighbor Cresimus, whose land was much smaller, they accused him of using evil spells in order to rob them. In his defense, the freedman Cresimus presented his agricultural implements in the forum to justify his good fortune, and the judgment came down in his favor. Pliny recounts the facts:

> I cannot refrain from adducing one instance from old times which will show that it was customary to bring before the people even questions of agriculture, and will exhibit the kind of plea that men of those days used to rely on to defend their conduct. Gaius Furius Cresimus, a liberated slave, was the object of great jealousy (*in invidia erat magna*), because he got much larger returns from a rather small farm than the neighborhood obtained from very large estates, and he was accused of using *veneficia* to entice away other people's crops (*ceu fruges alienas perliceret veneficiis*). He was consequently indicted by the *curule aedile* Spurius Albinus; and as he was afraid he would be found guilty, when the time came for the tribes to vote their verdict, he brought all his agricultural implements into the forum and produced his farm servants, sturdy people and also according to Piso's description well looked after and well-dressed, his iron tools of excellent make, heavy mattocks, ponderous ploughshares, and well-fed oxen. Then he said: 'These are my *veneficia*, citizens, and I am not able to exhibit to you or to bring to the forum my labors and lack of sleep and my sweat'. This procured his acquittal by a unanimous verdict. The fact is that husbandry depends on expenditure of labor, and this is the reason for the saying of our forefathers that on a farm the best fertilizer is the master's eye."[22]

22 Pliny, *Natural History*, 18, 8, 3–4, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 371 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), translation modified.

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As Richard Gordon has suggested, this episode shows that facts (like unusual agricultural success) that went against culturally stated rules (e.g., the limited good of small local farmers) and seemed anomalous could fall easily into acrimony, suspicion, and recourse to explanations like *veneficium*.[23] In sum, the only objective of the trial, itself based on the *Twelve Tables* was to reestablish a social equilibrium that had been threatened by economic anomaly.[24] The juridical exercise in which Cresimus participated was not peculiar to the Republic, nor did it exhibit any legal uncertainty with regard to evil charms and *veneficium*. In the 2nd century CE, Apuleius, faced with an accusation of sorcery that was just as difficult to challenge, elaborated a similar defense based on evidence that was concrete but ambiguous. Although this was not an agricultural conflict, the danger perceived by the plaintiffs was just as admissible: that is, the jeopardizing of social structure by a marriage outside the norms.[25]

1.2 *Counter-spells or Disenchantments in the Figurative Sense*

As we have just seen, in addition to hostile *carmina*, Romans feared the Evil Eye. This belief, attested by many writings, objects, and images, pervaded Mediterranean regions, especially Greece, an expression of envy or jealousy, that is, *invidia*.[26] We cover it here not to illustrate notions of *mageia* or *veneficia* per se but to display the range of ambiguous ritual practices and powers of which Romans were intimately aware, however they chose to generalize them intellectually or address them practically.

In his own references to it (see below) Pliny uses *fascinare* (*effascinantium*) in the sense "to cast a spell." Some, however, have compared *fascinum* to the term *fascia*, which means "band" and "bond," evoking the function of a knot, widely attested in ancient binding rituals.[27] But more importance might be credited

23 Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," 253–54.

24 Fritz Graf, *La Magie dans l'antiquité gréco-romaine: idéologie et pratique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994), 79.

25 Graf, *Magie dans l'antiquité*, 81–84.

26 Katherine M.D. Dunbabin and M.W. Dickie, "*Invidia Rumpantur Pectora*: The Iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art," *JAC* 26 (1983): 7–37; John H. Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, vol. 2, *Greece and Rome* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016). This term, which derives from the verb *invideo*, alludes directly to the gaze (Ernout and Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, 494). Catullus, moreover, uses the verb *invidere* to translate the fact of "looking at someone malevolently", or "casting an evil eye" (Tupet, *La Magie dans la poésie latine*, 181). The term is translated into Greek as *Φθόνος* (Anatole Bailly, *Dictionnaire grec–français* (Paris: Hachette, 1935).

27 In Lucillus, the *fascinum* is called *muttonium* (*penis*), a term derived from *mūtō*, which designates "Priapus" or the "male member." Ernout and Meillet refer the term to Mutunus Tutunus (Ernout and Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, 649), a marriage divinity that

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to the equivalence between *fascinum* and *βασκάνιος*, translated as "he who bewitches."[28] Aulus Gellius reports that (according to Cloatius Verus) the term *fascinum* comes from the Greek βασκάνιον ("one who bewitches"), and *fascinare* ("to enchant" or "to bewitch") from the verb *βάσκαινειν* ("to bewitch" or malign through Evil Eye).[29] Aristotle, Aeschylus, Euripides, Plato, Plutarch, Heliodorus, and Apollonius of Rhodes also attest to this meaning.[30] Despite the abundance of sources, there are none, as far as we know, that mention those who sold amulets and other devices to protect against such interpersonal dangers.[31]

There are likewise few testimonies to the throwing of hostile glances, but for the anecdote of the lawyer Regulus told by Pliny the Younger. To impress his adversaries, Regulus used makeup on one eye: "I often find myself missing Marcus Regulus (…) He used to be pale with anxiety, would write out his speeches though he could never learn them by heart, paint round one of his eyes (the right if he was appearing for the plaintiff and the left for the defendant), change a white patch over from one eyebrow to the other, and never fail to consult the soothsayers on the result of his case. This may have been gross *superstitio* on his part, but it did show respect for his profession."[32]

If one cannot explain these juridical practices by the great range of misfortunes potentially caused by 'fascination,' the fixing of the Evil Eye, one should keep in mind that there had long been many ways to counter such misfortunes through formulas, apotropaic gestures, amulets. For example, according to Plutarch, such devices were supposed to attract the gaze of the fascinator and deflect her destructive desire …:

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was already little known at the end of the Republic. The link with Priapus seems dubious (Marie-Karine Lhommé, "De Mutinus Titinus à Priape, ou les métamorphoses antiques et modernes d'un dieu oublié," in *Onomastique et intertextualité dans la littérature latine—Actes de la journée d'étude tenue à la Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée—Jean Pouilloux, le 14 mars 2005*, ed. Frédérique Biville and Daniel Vallat, Collection de la Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen Ancien, Série philologique 41 (Lyon: Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux, 2009), 195–220).

28 André Bernand, *Les sorciers grecs*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1995), 97–102.

29 *Attic Nights, 16, 12, 4: Cloatius Verus fascinum appellat quasi bascanum.*

30 The evil eye was sometimes attributed to an ocular anomaly peculiar to some individuals or groups (Tupet, *La Magie dans la poésie latine*, 390ff). According to Ovid, the evil eye belonged to women with a double pupil (*Amores*, 1, 8, 15, cited in Tupet, *La Magie dans la poésie latine*, 179). Pliny, for his part, specifies that: "Adults feel their fateful influence more easily. It is remarkable that they have two pupils in each eye …" (*Natural History*, 7, 2, 16).

31 Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2003), 130.

32 Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 6, 2, trans. Betty Radice. Loeb Classical Library 55 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 397–99, translation modified.

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> When those possessed by envy (φθόνος) to this degree let their glance fall upon a person, their eyes, which are close to the soul, and draw from it the evil influence of the passion, those glances fall upon that person like poisoned arrows (…); This is why the kinds of preservatives called amulets (ὁ τῶν λεγομένων προβασκανίων γένος) are thought to be a protection against fascination and envy. Their odd aspect (διὰ τὴν ἀτοπίαν τῆς ὄψεως) deflects the malevolent gaze, so that it impinges less upon its victim.[33]

Among the most common amulets were images of the *fascinum* and the eye itself. The Latin term *fascinum* designates both a curse, as Pliny indicates (above) and an amulet in the form of a phallus. According to Pliny, the phallus also represented the god Fascinus and protected the very young and military men:

> On the arrival of a stranger, or if a sleeping baby is looked at, the nurse spits three times, although the baby is further under the divine protection of Fascinus, guardian not only of children but of generals, a deity whose worship, part of the Roman religion, is entrusted to the Vestals; hanging under the chariots of generals at their triumphs he defends them as a physician from jealousy.[34]

According to Augustine the symbol represented Liber Pater, the god of germination and growth who was honored in the Italian countryside. For him, the festivities associated with the divinity were a (condemnable) way of securing his favor, in order to obtain good crops and avert the evil eye from the fields: "The god Liber had to be appeased in this way, to ensure the success of the crops and to avert evil influences (*fascinatio*) from the fields: a matron had to do in public what not even a courtesan should have been allowed to do in the theatre, if there were matrons present."[35] Here, it seems that his testimony confuses the prophylactic properties of the *fascinum* with Liber Pater and therefore ends up assimilating sorcery with an ancient cult. If obtaining the favors of Liber Pater was attested in the context of a propitiatory cult, it seems doubtful that it also carried a prophylactic aspect *stricto sensu*.

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33 Plutarch, *Moralia: Table Talk*, 4, 7, 3, trans. P.A. Clement and H.B. Hoffleit. Loeb Classical Library 424 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

34 Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. Rackham, 28, 7, 2, 4. (Translation modified).

35 Augustine, *City of God*, 7, 21, trans. William M. Green, Loeb Classical Library 412 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

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The phallic objects that were supposed to offer protection from the evil eye seem to have functioned to threaten anyone inclined to attack the symbol's owner; it was not a promise of fertility and abundance. This interpretation is suggested by the phalluses adorning the doorsteps of house, or defensive walls.[36] The same holds true for the representations that depict an eye, sometimes protective, other times hindered with weapons and other instruments.[37] In both cases, it seems, the "bad eye" is meant to be returned to its malicious sender. Thus, the eye symbol assumed two meanings according to context, one baleful and the other apotropaic, an ambiguity that characterizes almost all the images associated with the preservation of individuals and their possessions. This same ambiguity in apotropaic representation can be found with the Gorgon's mask, supposed to petrify those who looked at it, or with the image of the owl (*glaux/γλάυξ*), emblem of Athena, whose deliberately enlarged eyes averted bad luck. The bird's apotropaic nature can be found on a third-century mosaic from Thysdrus (El Jem/Tunisia). Here, it appears dressed in a toga, while the end of its left wing evokes the fingers of a *medius impudicus* (the gestural equivalent of the *fascinum*), directed at birds that are dropping dead. The scene is associated with an inscription that specifies: "Birds can die of jealousy, and the owl could not not care less".[38] For Ovid, on the other hand, the owl, with its immobile eyes, is a bird of ill omen that attacks newborn babies to feed on their blood.[39] In the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius a Thessalian sorceress

36 See Catherine Johns, *Sex or symbols. Erotic Images from Greece and Rome*, 2nd ed (London: British Museum, 2007); Magali Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges dans l'antiquité romaine. Archéologie des rituels et des images* (Paris: Hermann, 2010); and below, Wilburn, Chap. 20.

37 A marble bas-relief in the collection of the Duke of Bedford provides a good example. Here, the eye is being attacked by a *retiarius* armed with a trident, a crow, a crane, a scorpion, a snake and a lion. Published in the form of a 19th-century drawing in George Lafaye, "sv. Fascinum," in *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, ed. Daremberg Charles and Saglio Edmond (Paris: Hachette, 1881), 987, fig. 2887, Frederick Thomas Elworthy, *The Evil Eye: An Account of This Ancient and Widespread Superstition* (London: J. Murray, 1895), 137, fig. 24; photograph in Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges*, fig. 3.

38 According to Azedine Beschaouch the composition attests a rivalry between two sodalities, the Telegenii and the Aucupii. See Beschaouch, "Messages écrits contre les envieux dans la mosaïque africaine," in *L'écriture dans la maison romaine. Colloque international de* l'Année épigraphique (*11–13 mars 2004*), ed. Mireille Corbier and Jean-Pierre Guilhembert (Paris: de Boccard, 2011), 315–28.

39 Ovid, *Fasti*, 6, 135ff, translation based on that of M. Nisard (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1857).

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travels around in the form of an owl.[40] Finally, in Virgil, the owl assumes a funerary character, landing on the houses of those who are about to die.[41]

These symbols derived their force from their ambiguity: simultaneously salvific and baleful, they acted on the idea of the intrinsic power of the representation. In this context, any legal remedy for the dangers of envious or malicious glances may have been judged to be superfluous.

If they are more readily studied from an iconographical angle, these symbols' spatial locations must have had considerable importance.[42] In general, the *fascinum* is observed at the entrance of buildings, just as, according to Ovid, it was auspicious to place a hawthorn branch at one's door.[43] These images established a physical and symbolic limit, a demarcation of property, a fundamental social category in agrarian societies—as attested by the trial of Cresimus, for instance, and in a case from second-century Karanis, Egypt, in which a man tries to steal his neighbor's crops by immobilizing his harvesters with sorcery.[44] It was, moreover, on the ground—separating the underworld from the world of the living—that the *asarôtos oikos* ("unswept ground") was depicted in mosaic: a representation of food fallen on the ground. This strange imagery referred to the belief that leftover food appeased the souls of the dead,[45] contact with which had to be avoided, on pain of pollution. The *asarôtos oikos* apparently served as a symbolic, indestructible offering which, in a rather pragmatic way, replaced genuine reliefs of meals that the living must refrain from consuming.[46]

40 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 3, 21–22, ed. and trans. J. Arthur Hanson, Loeb Classical Library 44 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

41 Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4, 462–463, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G.P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library 63 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916).

42 See Wilburn, Chapter 20, below.

43 Ovid, *Fasti*, 6, 129–130.

44 See D. Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt," *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62.

45 Marcel Renard, "L'asarôton d'Aquilée" *Aquileia chiama* 1 (1954): 35–38, Waldemar Déonna and Marcel Renard, *Superstitions de table dans la Rome antique*, Collection Latomus 46 (Brussels: Peeters, 1961), 50–55.

46 Pliny confirms the belief, specifying that food that had fallen on the ground could not be consumed, and that eating the share of the dead was ill-omened: "In former times, when food fell from the hand of a guest, it was the custom to return it by placing it on the table, and it was forbidden to blow upon it, for the purpose of cleansing it. Auguries, too, have been derived from the words or thoughts of a person at the moment such an accident befalls him; and it is looked upon as one of the most dreadful of presages, if this should happen to a pontiff, while celebrating the feast of Dis." Pliny, *Natural History*, 28, 5 5.

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1.3 *The* Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis: *Justice against* venena

The *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis*, promulgated in 81 BCE, follows up on the *Twelve Tables*. It was aimed as much at common murders as those committed by less visible means. Homicides of this less visible sort were designated by *venefici* or, in Greek, *φάρμακα/pharmaka*, referring especially to poisoning: "The Cornelian law on murderers and poisoners punished the person who has killed a man, he who by willful misconduct has caused a fire, who has carried a weapon on his person in order to kill or to rob (…)." According to Macrianus, it punished the person who had prepared poison (*venenum*) in order to kill a man, and had administered it.[47] However, the legislator punished the use of *venena mala*, not of *venena* in the broad sense: "He who uses the term *venena*, medicine, must add whether it is good (*bonum*) or bad (*malum*), for all medicines are called *venena*."[48]

In this sense, the law took its place according to Latin etymological traditions, reflecting the ambiguity of the term.[49] According to Servius, *venenum* referred just as much to something good as to something evil.[50] The religious expression *venenor ut* ("*I use a charm in order to obtain*," "*I try to render propitious*") gives a good illustration of the ambiguity of *venenum*. This means that the law did not aim at the means, but at the intention of causing death, which certainly was no novelty in Roman jurisprudence.[51] However, like the misdeeds imputed to *carmina mala*, it was difficult to determine the causes

47 Macrianus, *Digest*, 48, 7, translation based on that of Henri Hulot (Paris: Rondonneau, 1866), 350. Cicero's speeches, which often concerned cases of poisoning, provide ample echoes of this law (Tupet, *Magie dans la poésie*, 203–9).

48 Macrianus, *Digest*, 50, 16, 236; p. 643 in Hulot. One finds the idea of homicide by poisoning in the Old French term 'vénéfice', which derives from Latin and seems to have preserved the association between 'suspicious deaths' and 'poisons'. According to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française, huitième édition* (Paris: Hachette, 1932–1935), a vénéfice is a "criminal poisoning in which one claims that there has been a spell. *To accuse of vénéfice. To be guilty of vénéfice.* It was rarely used, except in ancient criminal procedures". The term is taken up as a *hapax* by Verlaine: "Si bien que de fil en aiguille mon très profondément prémédité vénéficiard, préjudiciable et envoutementesque discours est ourdi juste à l'encontre de mon dessein (…)" (Paul Verlaine, *Vers de jeunesse* (Paris: Messein, 1922), 198).

49 James Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law: the case of the Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis," in *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome*, ed. Clifford Ando and Jörg Rüpke, Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 15 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 50.

50 Robert Schilling, *La Religion romaine de Vénus depuis les origines jusqu'au temps d'Auguste* (Paris: De Boccard, 1954), 42.

51 James Rives, "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime," in *The Religious History of the Roman Empire. Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. John A. North and Simon R.F. Price (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 77.

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of a suspicious death.[52] In the case of a common death, it was easier for the legislator to decide on the basis of tangible evidence, and for the injured party to obtain redress. In contrast, a death attributed to "poisoning" could only be supported by more or less reliable arguments, which left free reign to any suspicion, any trial, or even any settling of accounts in bad faith. If judicial vagueness about the use of *venenum* seems to have persisted, once again the *Lex Cornelia* implicitly shows that in either case (death by murder and death by poisoning) an individual's sudden demise could undermine the social equilibrium. Thus the text reaffirmed the values of society while acknowledging the reality of suspicious deaths, attributing them to the domain of what was both criminal and tangible. In other words, any non-natural death, however extraordinary (like a vanished crop), reflected conceivable causes and thus came under the jurisdiction of the law.[53]

Ultimately, one might think that at the time of the *Lex Cornelia*, the legislator's response had scarcely varied since the *Twelve Tables*. However, it seems that a shift did occur. In common language, *veneficus* could designate a sorcerer just as well as a poisoner, as is attested by the variety of its uses in the comedies of Plautus.[54] The ambiguity of these words must have favored the broadening of their meaning at a time when a broader spectrum of practices was making its appearance (potions, curse tablets, etc.). This is no doubt why cases of *venena* and of *carmina* must have induced the legislator to wonder himself about both the scope of the legislation and the range of causalities behind the accusations. Later, Quintilian came to wonder whether the *carmina* of the *magi* and the amorous potions (*amatoria*) that inflicted their victims should be included among the *veneficia* (poisonings).[55] The historical context certainly contributed to this shift. The political and moral crises of society at the end of the Republic, when Rome was destabilized through the growing influence of foreign rituals and the growing publicity of marginal rites, must

52 Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 77.

53 Cf. Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 80.

54 Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 130–131.

55 James Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law: the case of the Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis," in *Religion and Law*, 50–51. Quintilian, *Institutes* 7, 3, 7, translation based on that of Désiré Nisard, *Quintilien et Pline le jeune* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1865): "… whether the enchantments of the magicians (*carmina magorum*) are poisonings (*veneficium*)? Here, it is not at all the matter that is questioned, and it is well known that there is a difference … between enchantments (*carmina*) and a poisoned drink (*mortiferam potionem*); but what must be known is whether these acts should be called by the same name … Finally, the question sometimes turns on things of different species, and people never tire of debating whether they are to be called in the same way, even though each has a particular name, such, for instance, as a *potion* (*amatorium*), a *poison* (*venenum*)."

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certainly have contributed to the increasingly negative connotations around the term *veneficus*, both from the viewpoint of the average Roman citizen and from that of the legislator.

Just as the terms *venenum* and *φάρμακον* meant 'remedy', 'poison' or 'drug,'[56] so the herbalists *pharmacopola/pharmacopolae* (*φαρμακόπολαι*) must have been easily suspected, as in Greece, where they were often confused with—or regarded as—sorcerers (*φαρμάκεοι*/pharmakides).[57] In short, since most people assumed that one needed specific skills to prepare a remedy or a poison,[58] suspicions must have fallen upon those who took pride in their authority in knowledge of "good" or "bad" elements.[59]

The same pattern holds true for the women who, in Varro, initially used incantations in order to carry out cures (*praecantatrices*) but who, in Porphyrion, ended up in the less savory position of *saga*.[60] Most likely under the influence of Greek culture, the literary theme of the abandoned woman who tries, by means of potions, herbs, sacrifices, and charms to win back (or even murder) the lover or spouse who has deserted her became current. In the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, Meroe justifies her lover's crime in these terms: "This, sister Panthia, is my darling Endymion, my Ganymede. This is the one who made sport of my tender youth day and night, the one who disdained my love and not only slandered me with his insults but even plotted to escape. Shall I, forsooth, deserted like Calypso by the astuteness of a Ulysses, weep in everlasting loneliness?"[61] In Tibullus (*Elegies*), Propertius (*Elegies*), Ovid (*Art of Love, Metamorphoses*), Virgil (*Bucolics*), Horace (*Epodes, Satires*), and Lucan

56 The term *venenum*, corresponding to *φάρμακα*, referred to drugs (plants or other natural products), to poisons, and to incantations (*mala* or *bona*). Yet the dichotomy was not so simple. Depending on the doses administered, the effect of the same φάρμακα might vary: a small dose could produce an aphrodisiac; a stronger one could cause insomnia; an even heavier one could cause paralysis or madness, while a very heavy dose could cause death (Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001], 129).

57 Laurence M. Totelin, "*Pharmakopolai*. A Re-Evaluation of the Sources" in *Popular Medicine in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: Explorations*, ed. W.V. Harris, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 42 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2006), 65–85.

58 Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," 182.

59 Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 79; Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," 183. In general, however, the trials for poisoning related in stories tend to concern those who used them.

60 Varro, fr. 15, ed. Riese, *Saturarum Menippearum reliquiae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1865); Porphyrion, in Horace, *Carmina* 1.27.21. See Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, 133.

61 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 1, 12, ed. and trans. Hanson, 27.

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(*Pharsalus*), marginal rites are also those of women.[62] If these works may have reflected women's fears of seeing their lovers attracted by the *carmina* of their rivals or of prostitutes of Subure, the historians allege real practices on the part of women.[63] From Tacitus, we learn that Numantina, the first wife of the praetor Plautius Silvanus, was accusing of having driven her ex-husband mad by incantations and potions (*carminibus et ueneficiis*).[64] According to Suetonius, Caesonia gave a potion (*amatorio quidem medicamento*) to her husband Caligula, making him lose his mind.[65]

1.4 Venena et mala sacrificia

Although there was a conception of what was strange at Rome, it was not until the second half of the 1st century BCE that the Greek term *μαγεία/mageia* was transposed into Latin, at least in some authors.[66] For these authors, the word designated the official priests of Persia. In Pliny, *magia* included three disciplines: medicine, religion, and astrology. According to this author *magia* is false, arrogant, and pertains to excessive religious fervor.[67] Although he refers to the *Twelve Tables*, he does not assimilate *magia* to *veneficium*,[68] any more than he

62 Later on—to cite only one example—we learn from Lucian of Samosata that an elderly Syrian women made Bacchis' lover return by means of prodigies: "Well, my dearest, there is a most useful magician, a Syrian, who's still very fresh and firm. Once, when Phanias was angry with me without reason, just as Charinus is with you, she reconciled him with me after four whole months, when I'd already despaired of him; but he was brought back to me by her incantations" *Dialogues of the courtesans*, 4, in Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead. Dialogues of the Sea-Gods. Dialogues of the Gods. Dialogues of the Courtesans*, trans. M.D. MacLeod, Loeb Classical Library 431 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961).

63 E.g., Matthew W. Dickie, "Who Practised Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and in the Late Roman World," *Classical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (2000): 563–83; and Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, passim. Cf. Esther Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 206–12, and David Frankfurter, "The Social Context of Women's Erotic Magic in Antiquity," in *Daughters of Hekate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. Dayna Kalleres and Kimberly Stratton (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 319–39.

64 Tacitus, *Annals*, 4, 22, translation based on that of J.L. Burnouf, *Oeuvres complétes de Tacite* (Paris: Hachette, 1859).

65 *Caligula*, 50, 7, 8, translation based on that of M. Baudement, *Suetonius* (Paris: J.J. Dubochet, 1845).

66 Cf. Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," 165.

67 Pliny, *Natural History*, 30, 2.

68 In book XXX of the *Natural History*, he juxtaposes poisoning to sorcery: "Therefore let us be convinced by this that magic is detestable (…) their power comes from the art of the poisoner (*veneficas artes*), not of sorcery (*non magicas*)," Pliny, *Natural History* XXX, VI, 2, translation modified.

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confuses it with the medicine recounted by Cato. In Virgil's eighth *Bucolic*, by contrast, *magia* refers to *mala sacrificia, venena* and *carmina*: "Bring out water, and wind soft wool round this altar; and burn rich herbs and male frankincense, that I may try by a *magicis sanos* to turn to fire my lover's coldness of mood. Nothing is lacking here save enchantments (*carmina*). Bring Daphnis home from town, bring him, my songs!"[69] In Virgil, *magicis* designates 'exotic rituals' and probably conveys an erudite, Hellenizing tone without any link to Roman realities.[70] Cicero characterizes *mageia* in connection with necromancy, which he believed was prevalent in his time.[71] And for Pliny and others there was a general confusion between the *magicus* and the *mathematicus*.[72]

If a tendency to merge philosophy, sorcery, and astrology was gaining ground (especially from the perspective of an educated Greek in Rome), it was not until the mid-2nd century that *mala sacrificia* were forbidden:[73] "A *senatus consultus* ordered that he who had carried out or performed sacrifices at his home to bring about [someone else's] misfortune (*mala sacrificia*) should be punished with the same penalty."[74] The precise implications of *mala sacrificia* are not provided, but it may have included any type of divination that required a sacrifice, including necromancy, and quite likely rituals involving *tabellae defixionum* or *defixiones* that involved divinities and, hence, offerings.[75] Although it is ambiguous, the law corresponds to suspicions surrounding the death of Germanicus, which Tacitus links to a ritual of *defixio*:

> … and it is a fact that explorations in the floor and walls brought to light the remains of human bodies (*humanorum corporum reliquiae*), formulas of enchantment and imprecations (*carmina et devotiones*), leaden tablets engraved with the name Germanicus, charred and blood-smeared ashes

69 Virgil, *Eclogue*, 8, 64–68, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G.P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library 63 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), translation modified.

70 Graf, *Magie dans l'antiquité*, 50.

71 Cicero, *Tusculanes* 1.37; *In Vaticinia* 14; see Tupet, *La Magie dans la poésie latine*, 206.

72 Cf. Pliny, *Natural History*, 30, 1, 2.

73 Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law," 58; Rives, "Magic in Roman Law, 81. This addition takes its place in the moment when Latin literature began to introduce portraits of stereotyped sorceresses, practicing macabre and horrifying rituals (Tupet, *La Magie dans la poésie latine*), stories which certainly echoed the growing anxiety of a society in crisis and in transformation (*cf.* Richard Gordon, "Lucan's Erictho," in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble*, ed. Michael Whitby and Philip Hardie (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987), 238–41.

74 Macrianus, *Digest*, 48, 7 (Hulot, p. 354).

75 Cf. Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law," 55–57.

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(*semusti cineres ac tabo obliti*)[76] and other symbols (*malefica*), by which it is believed the living soul can be devoted to the infernal divinities.[77]

The *Lex Cornelia* appeared at a time when the use of *venena* and *carmina* may have been expanding in scope.[78] In Rome, *defixiones* had been infrequent prior to the end of the Republic.[79] But in the area of jurisprudence the *Opinions of Paulus*, a commentary on the *Lex Cornelia* from 212 CE, introduce an entirely new idea. It was no longer the goal of sorcery (like murder) that was condemned but the very system of sorcery itself, such as it could be imagined.[80]

76 The presence of human remains is surprising, for in general the ritual was characterized rather by sacrifices of animals, and its connection with the dead consisted merely in soliciting their soul, or in placing a written incantation in the grave. The mention of human ashes must have served to add more spice to the story.

77 Tacitus, *Annals*, 2, 69, ed. and trans. John Jackson, _Tacitus II_, Loeb Classical Library 249 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 494–95 (translation modified).

78 Measures against marginal practices were not, however, peculiar to this period. Thus, according to Livy, in 213 BCE, in a context that was just as tense, the Senate had ordered the destruction of all books of all essentially non-Roman prophecies, prayers, and rituals (Livy, *Roman History*, 25, 1, 6–12).

79 A *defixio* from Rome in the Augustan period is the oldest example that has been discovered there (*DT* n°138). The practice of the ritual is, moreover, attested by tablets from Etruscan burials dating from the 3rd century (*DT* n°124–126, 128) and by other ones written in Oscan (*DT* 192, 193). Does this mean that their use was exceptional before the end of the Republic? This is by no means certain, since the texts may have been inscribed on perishable materials. Tacitus' story can also be corroborated by an Augustan *defixio* from Ampurias (Spain) aimed at high civil servants, including Marius Maturus, procurator of the Maritime Alps in 69, and the senator Titus Aurelius Fulvus, a direct relative of Antoninus Pius (Heikki Solin, *Eine neue Fluchtafeln aus Ostia. Anhang: Eine Übersicht über lateinische, die nicht bei Audollent und Besnier finden*. Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 42. 3 (Helsinki: 1968), n°26–28). Later on, Pliny himself emphasizes that "there is no one who is not afraid of being enchanted by malevolent prayers" (*Defigi quidem diris precationibus nemo non metuit*), Pliny, *Natural History*, XXVIII. It is very likely that many people other than Pliny were worried about such enchantments. Cicero reports that a lawyer, C. Scribonius Curio, had lost his memory in the course of a plea, and attributed the cause to spells and potions (*veneficiis et cantionibus*) Cicero, *Brutus ou Dialogue sur les Orateurs Illustres*, translation based on that of M. Burnouf, (Paris: Delalain, 1868), 217). *Defixiones* were often used in the context of trials, to prevent the opposing party from expressing themselves (see Audollent, *Defixionum*). See below, Eidinow, Chapter 15.

80 Paulus, *Sentences*, 5, 23, 18, Julius Paulus, Sententiarum receptarum libri quinque qui vulgo Julio Paulo adhuc tribuntur, I Edizione IntraText CT, 2017), http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0621/_INDEX.HTM. Éliane Massonneau, *La Magie dans l'antiquité romaine. La magie dans la littérature et les mœurs romaines. La répression de la magie* (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1934), 192–194; Andrzej Wypustek. "Accusations portées contre les chrétiens aux IIe et IIIe siècles pour détention de livres de magie. Quelques remarques dans la lignée du livre de W. Speyer," *Antiquitas* 25 (2000): 180–181.

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Chapter XIII, *Ad legem Corneliam de sicariis et veneficis*, prohibited practices, books, and remedies.[81] But elsewhere it was divination and prophecies that were the main targets.[82] The goal was to put a stop to any challenges to political power. Thus, consulting *mathematici, harioli, haruspices* and *vates* in order to learn the future of the prince, or asking a question concerning the public welfare was punishable by death.

According to the *Opinions of Paulus*, all those who practiced "impious nocturnal rites" (*sacra impia nocturnae*) with a view to enchanting (*obcantarent*), paralyzing (*defigerent*, the verb from which *defixio* derives), or binding (*obligarent*) were to be condemned.[83] This expansion on the *Lex Cornelia* is odd, for here the *defixio* is not condemned as bad (*malum*), but rather as impious. This new perspective anticipated the later notion of religious deviance, which legislators of subsequent centuries elaborated.[84] Although we can hardly speak of condemnation for religious deviance in this period, the *Opinions of Paulus* affirm that the *mala sacrificia* of the *Lex Cornelia* referred, in fact, to the ritual of *defixio*.

The same holds true of erotic charms and enchantments (including abortion and erotic charms), which, according to Paulus, involved the darkest sorcery.[85] Indeed, the section of the *Lex Cornelia* aimed at sorcery (§§318–319) was still framed within the Roman juridical tradition, limiting the prohibitions on ritual acts to harmful activities.[86] It was only later that erotic charms were clearly condemned. The *maleficus*[87] and the *seductor* both came to be regarded as real criminals.[88] In its time also, the *Theodosian Code* prosecuted erotic enchantments, for they "turned virtuous souls toward debauchery."[89]

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81 The penalties were very harsh: condemnation to be handed over to wild animals or to be burned alive.

82 Chapter XXI: *De vaticinatoribus et mathematicis*.

83 Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law," 58.

84 Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law," 59–67.

85 Cf. Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law," 53.

86 Jules Maurice, "La terreur de la magie au IVe siècle," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* (1927): 108–110. Thus, medical techniques and those that allowed the protection of crops were authorized.

87 *Maleficus* derives from *maleficium*, which, in the 4th century, refers to "malignant sorcery", that is, to rituals that harm the physical or mental well-being of others (Maria Victoria Escribiano Paño, "Heretical Texts and *Maleficium* in the Codex Theodosianus (CTh. 16.5.34)," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, ed. Richard Gordon and Fransisco Marco Simón, RGRW 168 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 122).

88 Andrzej Wypustek, "Un aspect ignoré des persécutions des chrétiens dans l'antiquité: les accusations de magie érotique imputées aux chrétiens aux II^{e} et III^{e} siècles," *JAC* 42 (1999): 52–53.

89 *Theodosian Code*, 9, 16, 3. Latin text via http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/theodosius.html.

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Indeed, by the end of 356, sorcery, haruspicy, and divination were all judged equally harmful and equally liable to condemnation.[90] Yet consultation of astrologers clearly continued anyway. In the mid-fourth century the ambiguity of these practices is attested by Ammianus Marcelinus and his account of the trial of Scythopolis (Palestine). According to Ammianus, a certain Demetrius of Alexandria, accused in 359 of having engaged in divination, was acquitted when he explained that all he had done was to honor the gods.[91] If the sacrifice of animals and manipulation of their entrails (*exta*) had motivated the accusation, it also could provide an argument for the defense.

Carmina, in contrast—that is, the preparation of *venena*, curses, predictions, and even exorcism—came in the late fourth century to be considered condemned "arts."[92] This is revealed in the repression carried out against *veneficium* by Apronius at the end of 362[93] and the condemnation of *maleficium*, particularly with regard to suspicions against charioteers.[94] If these practices struck legislators as transgressions capable of destabilizing political power, it is because this "terror of magic" (in the words of Jules Maurice) coincided with the renewal of the ruling class, not with ideological or religious conflicts. Indeed, the ancient aristocratic class found itself in competition with new arrivals, supported by the ambitions of the emperor, who was naturally concerned to maintain the political order. The old class was therefore increasingly suspected of having recourse to oracles, or practices liable to endanger the ruling powers.[95] It is in this sense that Ammianus Marcelinus reports false accusations whose only goal was to eliminate political adversaries. And like philosophers, Christians also came to be accused.[96]

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90 *Theodosian Code,* 9, 16, 4–5, *cf.* Graf, *Magie dans l'antiquité*, 100–105, 254–255.

91 Ammianus, *History*, XIX, 12, 12. Daytime sacrifices were condemned and isolated temples were closed in 356 (*Theodosian Code* 16, 10, 4–16).

92 *Theodosian Code,* 9. 16, Escribiano Paño, "Heretical Texts," 122.

93 Ammianus, *Histories*, 26, 3.

94 *Theodosian Code*, 9, 16, 11. According to Ammianus Marcelinus, in 362–363 the charioteer Hilarinus was accused of initiating his son to enchantments (Ammianus, *Histories*, 26, 3, 3). In 368, some senators and the carriage driver Auchenius were punished for having fixed races by means of enchantments (Ammianus, *Histories*, 26, 3,4). For the same reasons, Athanasius, another charioteer, was burned alive in 372 (Ammianus, *Histories*, 29, 3, 3, 5).

95 Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in *Witchcraft. Confessions and Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas (London; New-York: Tavistock, 1970), 17–45.

96 On antipathy against Christians as sorcerers, see Andrzej Wypustek, "Magic, Montanism, Perpetua, and the Severan Persecution," *VC* 51.3 (1997): 276–97; Wypustek, "Un aspect ignoré."

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2 The Ambiguity of Historical Ritual Practices

Having surveyed the language of ambiguous and illegitimate rituals in Roman culture and jurisprudence, it is useful to turn to the evidence of ritual practices themselves to investigate the degree to which they posed an intrinsic ambiguity within Roman culture. The juridical and historical sources constitute precious testimonies to marginalized practices, but anthropology teaches us to avoid biased preconceptions and to recognize the codified language in these ancient testimonies, as would have been apparent to those in the culture. According to Stanley Tambiah, this language is based in metaphorical connections whose meaning and "magical potential" become transferable to any object.[97] His analyses have demonstrated that the efficacy of rituals depends on persuasion. It is in this sense that M. Augé has seen these rituals not as a "negation of the social" but rather as "the secret, or one of the secrets, of its functioning."[98] The varied responses of the Romans towards these practices can be explained by the fact that they were attached to the same ideological register as religious phenomena and beliefs. Another way of understanding the ambiguity of many ritual acts in Roman culture is in light of Speech Acts theory: that is, J.L. Austin's observation that a word not only describes an act, but constitutes the act as well. The word is therefore active and performative. In this perspective, Fritz Graf has been able to reveal the importance of the verbs used in the *defixiones*. According to him, "there are 'performative' verbs for which the act of enunciation constitutes the very accomplishment of what is enunciated: by stating 'I swear it', I accomplish the oath."[99]

2.1 Defixiones*: Words, Gestures, and Symbols*

Defixiones, which have been abundantly documented and studied, certainly carry an intrinsic ambiguity.[100] In fact, if we consider the *defixio* rituals as oriented only towards the gods, we risk limiting the analysis by relegating it to the domain of *supersititio* (in the ancient Roman sense) or, in modern terms,

97 Stanley J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought and Social action: an Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 17–59.

98 Marc Augé, *Le Génie du paganisme.* 2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 211.

99 Graf, *Magie dans l'antiquité*, 26, Amina Kropp, "How does Magical Language Work? The Spells and Formulae of the Latin *Defixionum Tabellae*," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 357–80.

100 John Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), Richard Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón, eds., *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges*, Drew Willburn, Materia Magica. *The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013), and below, Eidinow, Chap. 15.

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erroneous thinking. But the very idea of constraint can be elaborated, allowing *defixiones* to be serve as testimonies to ancient mentalities.

For example, we might consider the terminology involved in these texts. The procedure that was to bring victory over someone (juridical, erotic, or athletic) was designated in Latin and Greek by *defigere* ('to fix') and καταδεῖν ('to tie down'). The victims were 'fixed', 'tied down', 'immobilized by words', or consigned to the underworld.[101] However, these verbs were also used in a physical sense. *Defigere* is related to *fixum, fixere*: 'to embed', 'sink into', 'pierce', and it appears in religious language. Thus, with a text engraved on a lead tablet, the verb signifies that it must "be fixed with spikes": '*utei eam figier*.'[102] Deriving from *figo* and *fiuó*, it also refers to the action of 'declaring steadfastly.'[103] These are elements of the ritual performance itself, which closely associated gesture, symbol, and words. In Ovid, the verb assumes both meanings (proper and figurative): 'to fix a name in wax or on a lead tablet, to enchant (the victim), to immobilize him …' 'to metamorphose'.[104] Perhaps Ovid had grasped the performative nature of the *carmen*?

This association between gesture, symbol, and word in *defixiones* likewise emerges in an example from Carthage: a nail (or a dagger) is drawn alongside the inscription, made up of several lines of *voces magicae*.[105] The drawing, gesture, and value of the *carmen* must have had the same symbolic value, which mutually reinforced each another. More generally, once the inscription had been engraved on a tablet, the latter was often folded or rolled up, and sometimes perforated by one or even several nails. Here, the goal was presumably to close the ritual and make it irrevocable. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that the word *clavus* ('nail' or 'key') refers to *clavis* and to *clavos*, both of which come from the verb *claudo*, which signifies 'to close, to enclose' and 'primitive lock.'[106] The use of a nail might correspond both to the immobilization of the victims and to the irrevocability of the ritual. According to A. Audollent,

101 Graf, *Magie dans l'antiquité*, 142–151.

102 Ernout and Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, 358–359.

103 Cicero, *On the Laws*, 2, 8, in Ernout and Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, 358–359: *quae augur vitiosa, dira defixerit, irrita sunto*).

104 Ovides, *Amores*, III, vii, 27–30: *defigere nomem, defixit nomina cera.*

105 *DT* n°243.

106 Ernout and Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, 194–195. It is in this sense that a group of remains linked to a ritual of enchantment discovered at Reims has been interpreted. This deposit was made up of a clay figurine deposited in a cup made of *terra sigillata*, which was itself covered by a second recipient onto which seven balls of organic material had been applied. This second vase was decorated by an iron key. A third recipient concealed the entire group: see Magali Bailliot, "Roman Magic figurines from the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire: An Archaeological Survey", *Britannia* 46 (2015): 93–110.

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the text involved a *similia similibus* formula: that is, expressions that analogized the fate of the victim to that of a sacrificial animal, a nailed tablet,[107] or the deceased person occupying the grave in which the curse was buried.[108] In this sense, one might say that the ritual amounted to a symbolic funeral. For ancient people, however, entering into contact with the lower world represented a pollution against which they sought to preserve themselves. This is why ordinary funerals fixed a symbolic limit separating the dead from the living.[109] Fear of the dead and of ghosts is amply documented in the texts,[110] and sometimes by iconographical sources, which often feature ambiguous symbols.

Here we might consider the mosaic from the *colonia Iulia Clipea* (Kelibia/Tunisia), intended to banish *invidia*.[111] It depicts an old man whose appearance resembles how Romans imagined ghosts. Sitting on a stool, his left foot is secured by a chain linked to a peg stuck into the ground. The scene, accompanied by the inscription "You too, burn!" indicates very clearly that this is a warning against the envious. The mosaic image threatens to send them to the world of the dead by confusing them with the ghost. Here, a pointed object customarily used in the ritual of *defixio* assumes an apotropaic meaning, like the *fascinum* and other symbols. According to Pliny, hammering a nail where an epileptic had just collapsed allowed the illness to be 'fixed' to the ground, and the neutralization of the soul of the dead person that was the origin of the evil.[112] Pliny also indicates that placing nails in henhouses allows the eggs to be preserved from the harmful effects of thunder.[113] Nails were placed in tombs as well, with a view to protecting oneself from malevolent souls. Archaeologists

107 The curses were sometimes nailed in order to be fixed on a support, or else to be pinned up.

108 Some texts make a direct connection between the victim and the material on which they have been engraved, generally lead, a cold metal that evokes death (*DT* n°105b, 107).

109 George Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Payot, 2000), 369, Nicole Belayche, "La neuvaine funéraire ou 'la mort impossible' à Rome," in *La mort au quotidien dans le monde romain. Actes du colloque organisé par l'Université de Paris iv (7–9 octobre 1993)*, ed. François Hinard and Marie- Françoise Lambert (Paris: De Boccard, 1995), 155–70.

110 Émile Jobbé-Duval, *Les morts malfaisants, Larvae, lemure, d'après le droit et les croyances populaires des Romains*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Exergue, 2000).

111 Henri Lavagne, "Le cordonnier fantôme de la mosaïque de Kélibia (Tunisie)," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (2003): 39–60.

112 Pliny, *Natural History*, 28, 17, 3.

113 Pliny, *Natural History*, 10. 152.

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have discovered numerous urns or buried dead that were surrounded or even perforated by nails.[114]

In Greek, the use of καταδεῖν is analogous to *defigere* but means 'to tie down', 'to keep down, immobile', and 'to tie up'. The idea of ligation is also found in Latin with the verbs *alligo, obligo, adligo* and *implicare*.[115] In Ovid's *Fasti*, the ritual is characterized by binding: "she binds enchanted threads together with dark lead."[116] Indeed, the *similia similibus* most certainly corresponded to a "symbolic transfer", as defined by Tambiah.[117]

3 Conclusion

Although testimonies to the trials for sorcery are relatively rich, they often reflect the privileged classes: fears of losing possessions, threats to social status or political power. From the *Twelve Tables* to the repression of the 4th century, our sources allow the discovery of crises and their contexts. But it is above all the complex character of these laws and the evolution of their vocabularies that have engaged this essay. How might the Other—the *veneficus*, the *maleficus*, the *magicus*, the necromancer—be the mirror for what gave structure to Roman society throughout the centuries? Perhaps those traces of rituals carried out by the aggrieved and anxious show that recourse to *defixiones*, divination,

114 Cf. Jacques Matter, *Une excursion gnostique en Italie* (Paris: Berger-Levrault. 1852), 22, Edmond Saglio, "sv. Clavus." in *Dictionnaire des Antiquités* (Paris: Hachette, 1887), 1241, fig. 1616. According to Livy, in the case of the female poisoners, the dictator hammered in a nail in order to cure popular madness (*Roman History*, 8.18.12). Further on apotropaic nails, see Magali Bailliot, "Autour des morts: Rites et croyances du paganisme au christianisme dans le Département de l'Essonne," *Cartes archéologique de la Gaule* 91 (2004): 75–81; Silvia Alfayé Villa, "Nails for the Dead: A Polysemic Account of an Ancient Funerary Practice," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, ed. R.L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón, RGRW 168 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 427–56.

115 *DT* n°218. The formula written in Celtic on a *defixio* from Larzac also alludes to the Greek verb: 'sorceress by writing by a sorceress' writing by thread' (Pierre-Yves Lambert, *La langue gauloise, description linguistique, commentaires d'inscriptions choisies* (Paris: Errance, 1997), 160–172). The tablet had, moreover, been closed by means of threads and a needle (Michel Lejeune et alii, "Le plomb magique du Larzac et les sorcières gauloises". *Études celtiques* 22 (1985): 93).

116 Ovid, *Fasti*, II, 575: *Cantata ligat cum fusco licia plumbo*.

117 Stanley J. Tambiah, "Magical Power of Words," in *Culture, Thought and Social action*, 17–59. It is also in this way that the *oussia/Oúsía* (hairs, nail parings, or objects belonging to the victims) can be interpreted. In the PGM, they served to invoke the divinities, so that they act against the victims of the enchantment (*Supp. Mag.* n°48, 49, 50, 51, PGM IV 296–466, PGM XV).

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and protective spells did not challenge social rules so much as lend themselves to a play of ambiguities—of interventions into the tacit equilibrium between those who held political power, possessing mastery of the workings of society, and itinerant experts, holding knowledge in the marginal and compelling arts.

Suggested Readings

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Elliott, John H., *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, vol. 2, *Greece and Rome* (Eugene, or: Cascade Books, 2016).

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CHAPTER 10

Early Christianity

Joseph E. Sanzo

1 Introduction

The nascent Jesus movements imagined in various ways sacred practices, actions, and gestures that we would call 'rituals.'[1] Although certain approaches to—and conceptions of—ritual remained constant throughout the first several centuries of Christian history, many shifted in accordance with changes in the socio-political landscape. In particular, the decision of Constantine to function as a patron of Christianity set into motion a Christianizing process that impacted the nature, scope, and direction of ritual in the empire. Indeed, imperial support for politically expedient versions of Christianity was made manifest in various rites, even in the unsanctioned rites of those maligned as heretics.[2] Augustine, for instance, took for granted that putatively orthodox and Donatist baptisms were indistinguishable as ritual practices.[3] Likewise, objects, such as φυλακτήρια, whose compatibility with Christianity was a matter of much controversy (see the discussion below), often cited ecclesiastical creeds and other textual elements that reflected imperially supported versions of Christianity.[4]

This Christianization process, however, took place unevenly within and across diverse institutional, material, and performative settings. Priests, artists, builders, and scribes (re)presented Christianity and Christian ritual in different and sometimes incompatible ways. Shared artistic and architectural forms

1 On the problems associated with the category ritual, see R.J. Grimes, "Ritual," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. W. Braun and R.T. McCutcheon (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 259–270; C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). For a discussion of early Christian ritual more generally, see R. Uro, *Ritual and Christian Beginnings: A Socio-Cognitive Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

2 For a general theory of the impact of politically supported 'orthodoxy' on 'heresy' and heretical practice, see P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 159–71.

3 Augustine, *De baptismo* (*contra Donatistas*) I.2.

4 E.g., P. Haun. III 51; P. Ludg.-Bat. XIX 20; P. Turner 49. For 'Christian' elements more generally, see de T. Bruyn and J. Dijkstra, "Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets," *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 48 (2011): 163–216.

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(e.g., chancel screens) on synagogues and churches visually undermined—if inadvertently—the particular boundaries between Jewish and Christian ritual spaces that leaders, such as John Chrysostom, promoted.[5] This unevenness played out further on local and global levels. The formative traditions, customs, and experts of individual locales did not always comport with conceptions of religious and ritual authority among global ecclesiastical and imperial leaders. Patristic writings are replete with complaints of believers visiting neighborhood healers and other ritual specialists, the ranks of whom included local Christian clericals. Yet, as we will see below, even ostensibly elite representatives of church and state occasionally disagreed with one another in their respective approaches to ritual practice. It is not surprising, therefore, that legal, imperial, and episcopal documents erected bulwarks of Christian ritual that conflicted—albeit to varying degrees—with one another and with social reality in localities around the empire.

Early followers of Jesus disapproved of or established restrictions on various domains of ritual, including commensality,[6] sacrifice,[7] and public festivals.[8] The diverse phenomena commonly relegated to "magic" likewise constituted a sphere—or cluster of spheres—of ritual, which, on occasion, provoked the scorn, disapproval, or condemnation of certain Christian/imperial *literati*. In light of the thematic parameters of this volume, it is this latter area of illicit ritual that stands at the center of this chapter.[9]

In particular, this essay focuses on a relatively wide range of instances in the literature of the nascent Jesus movements and emergent Christianity in which modern *scholars* have inferred accusations of 'magic'—or prohibitions against improper, inferior, or ambiguous rituals related to our contemporary category

5 E.g., L.I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 210–49, 466–498, 519–29; J.R. Branham, "Sacred Space under Erasure in Ancient Synagogues and Early Churches," *Art Bulletin* 74 (1992): 375–94.

6 Cf. Luke 14:1–24. For discussion, see S.S. Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus and Reversal of Honor at the Table," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. W. Stegemann, B.J. Malina, and G. Theissen, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 175–83.

7 E.g., G. Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

8 E.g., Epiphanius, *De Fides*, 12.1; Shenoute, *The Lord Thundered*, (codex DU), p. 45; D. Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," in *A People's History of Late Antique Christianity*, ed. V. Burrus (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 255–84, esp. 260–61.

9 Of course, the lines between ostensibly 'magical' rituals and other kinds of rituals deemed inappropriate (e.g., sacrifice) were drawn in various ways in Christian antiquity. The isolation of 'magical' rituals in this essay, therefore, is heuristic.

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'magic.'[10] As we will see, some of these cases (e.g., the Simon story in the canonical Acts of the Apostles) in fact have very little to do with illicit *rituals*; however, such texts have entered into modern scholarly discourses about magic and illicit ritual and, therefore, require our attention.

I divide the texts in this chapter into two partially overlapping sections: (1) Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Growth and Development in the Literary Tradition and (2) Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Discursive Contexts. This two-fold structure not only showcases the development of μαγεία, φαρμακεία, etc. along with their shifting taxonomic relationships to one another and to other notions of wrongdoing in early Christian literature. It also attends to the concerns and discursive contexts that formed—and were formed by—Christian views of illicit and ambiguous ritual.

2 Caveats

The focus and direction of this essay necessitate a few preliminary qualifications and points of clarification. Due to the limitations of space, this study is necessarily schematic and selective. The parameters of the essay, for instance, preclude my examination of early Christian texts that depict Jesus or his early followers themselves as engaging in (implicitly) sanctioned rituals that appear similar to those activities otherwise labeled μαγεία (or that scholars might deem 'magic'), except insofar as these rituals illuminate the conceptual boundaries of perceived illegitimacy.[11] Accordingly, this study will not address issues like Jesus' rituals of healing or exorcism in the Gospels, despite the popularity of these topics in the history of early Christianity and so-called 'magic.'[12]

This scholarly agenda also mandates that I pay special attention to the semantic ranges of and interrelations between the operative terms in these texts (e.g., μαγεία, φαρμακεία, and *malefici*). Indeed, μαγεία is not the equivalent

10 My focus, therefore, converges with what David Frankfurter has called the 'discourse of ritual censure' (Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic," 257). For similar surveys, see F.C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 316–448; H.F. Stander, "Amulets and the Church Fathers," *Ekklesiastikos pharos* 75 (1993): 55–66; M. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London" Routledge, 2003) 195–262; T. de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17–42.

11 For the relevant sources, see D. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *ANRW* II. 23.2, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 1507–57.

12 I will thus avoid in this regard the vexed question of Jesus' status as a 'magician' (cf. M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978). See above, Frankfurter, chapter 1.

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of magic.[13] This emphasis on indigenous terminology, however, does not constitute 'emics,' *per se*. The motivating interests of this essay along with the occasional deconstructive note reside at the crossroads of 'ancient Christian ideas of ritual' and the models, taxonomies, and interests that have framed each of these components in scholarly imagination.[14]

The rubric 'Christian' also deserves special attention in this regard. My decision to include the writings of early Jesus followers—including the first- and second-century CE texts collected in the New Testament—in a discussion of early *Christian* views of illicit ritual is in no way meant to suggest a 'parting of the ways' between Jews and Christians or any other model that frames the diverse Jesus movements as a discrete religious body during the first centuries of the Common Era.[15] I thus agree (for example) with scholars who have demonstrated the problems pertaining to genre and social context in treating the book of Revelation as a distinctively Christian document.[16] The same concerns apply to the other early texts, including those outside of the New Testament (e.g., the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*).

3 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Growth and Development in the Literary Tradition

In this section, I analyze key shifts in Christian portrayals of illegitimate ritual. The discussion is divided into two subsections: (1) Narratives and Stories (e.g.,

13 D. Aune, "'Magic' in Early Christianity and Its Ancient Mediterranean Context: A Survey of Some Recent Scholarship," *ASE* 24 (2007): 229–94 at 236–49; F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip, Revealing Antiquity 10 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1997), 26, 30, 34, 39, 56. On the disjuncture between the Latin *magus* (and its cognates) and 'magic,' see J.B. Rives, "*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, ed. R.L. Gordon and F.M. Simón (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 53–77.

14 On the 'emic'–'etic' distinction, see M. Harris, "Emics and Etics Revisited," in *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*, ed. T.N. Headland, K. Pike, and M. Harris (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 48–61; D. Frankfurter, "Comparison and the Study of Religions of Late Antiquity," in *Comparer en histoire des religions antiques: Controverses et propositions*, ed. C. Calame and B. Lincoln (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2012), 83–98, esp. 87–89.

15 For the problems with the 'parting-of-the-ways' model, see the now classic collection of essays in A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

16 E.g., D. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic," *Neotestamentica* 40 (2006): 1–33; D. Frankfurter, "Jews or Not? Reconstructing the 'Other' in Rev. 2:9 and 3:9," *HTR* 94 (2001): 403–25.

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depictions of Simon 'Magus' and St. Antony) and (2) Lists and Catalogues (e.g., the lists in Gal. 5 and in the so-called 'Laodicean' canon). The two subsections offer a clear glance into the development of early Christian ideas about (illicit) ritual, while simultaneously accounting for literary precedent and convention. This discussion sets the stage for my analysis of the various discursive contexts into which illegitimate ritual figured (Section 4).

3.1 *Narratives and Stories*

Narrative constituted one of the principle forms through which early Christians worked out their notions of (il)legitimate ritual. Tales, which contrast heroes of the faith with flawed or evil antagonists, were often used to highlight sins and practices deemed inappropriate.

Like their predecessors and contemporaries in the Mediterranean world, New Testament authors deployed narratives in their discussions of inappropriate behaviors.[17] Although New Testament writers used words, such as μαγεία and its cognates, the stories in which these terms appear typically emphasized domains of activity that have very little to do with our redescriptive categories 'magic' or (illegitimate) ritual. Nevertheless, I discuss such narratives in relative detail because (1) they help demonstrate the conceptual and lexical trajectories of the relevant terms within early Christian discourses and (2) they have held a prominent position in the history of scholarship.

3.1.1 The Μάγοι in Matt. 2:1–12

The Gospel of Matthew's depiction of the μάγοι in the nativity pericope (Matt. 2:1–12) exemplifies the neutral ('non-magical') connotations of this word group among certain early followers of Jesus. By the time this Gospel was composed, μάγοι had a host of referents, including Persian priests/ritual specialists,[18] charlatans,[19] and ritual experts more generally.[20] That Matthew

17 For a discussion of the relevant literature, see D. Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2008), 27–63.

18 E.g., Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.100–101, trans. F.H. Colson, Loeb Classical Library 320 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). Philo also notes in this passage the existence of charlatans under the same name.

19 E.g., Hippocrates, *De morbo sacro* 1.80. For claims that μάγοι and other ritual experts were primarily motivated by avaricious concerns, see n. 31 below.

20 E.g., Callisthenes, *Life of Alexander the Great* 4.3. For a more robust analysis of the semantic range of μάγος, see Fritz Graf, *Magic*, 20–25; M. Becker, "Μάγοι—Astrologers, Ecstatics, Deceitful Prophets: New Testament Understanding in Jewish and Pagan Context," in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. M. Labahn and B.J. Lietaert Peerbolte (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 87–106; R. Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece*

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emphasizes their eastern origin (Matt. 2:1–2) suggests that he understood the term as referring to foreign (presumably Persian) priests and highlighted their exotic wisdom.[21] Matthew portrays these foreigners as the protagonists in this narrative; they not only correctly calculate the location (Matt. 2:1–2) and time (Matt. 2:7) of Jesus' birth, but they also receive a similar kind of dream warning as the biblical Joseph (Matt. 2:12; cf. Matt. 2:23). This positive presentation of the μάγοι is particularly interesting because, within a Roman context, their prophetic actions against a standing ruler, Herod (cf. Matt. 2:3–4, 7, 12, 16), could have been understood as sedition.[22]

Thinking about Matthew's treatment of the μάγοι in light of subsequent Christian uses of this term reveals important details that are missing from this story. There are no hints in the narrative that the μάγοι were participating in any kind of illegitimate or inappropriate ritual practice. In fact, ritual practices do not figure in this story other than in the implicit astrological/astronomical methods the μάγοι used to determine the location of Jesus' birth.[23] There is also no indication whatsoever that the μάγοι were associated with demons or evil spirits. Although the story remains silent on the specifics of their dream warning, the context implies that, as with Joseph, the author envisioned them receiving the dream from 'an angel of the Lord' (ἄγγελος κυρίου) or another divine emissary. Matthew, therefore, seems to have used μάγος in its original, 'technical sense' (i.e., referring to foreign/Persian ritual specialists), which had precedents in both ancient Greek thought and in contemporary Latin prose.[24]

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and Rome, ed. B. Ankarloo and S. Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 159–275.

21 Becker, "Μάγοι," 103–104.

22 E.g., Tacitus, *Annales*, II, 32; XII, 52. On the significance of this legislation for Matthew's μάγοι, see C. Pharr, "The Interdiction of Magic in Roman Law," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 63 (1932): 269–95, esp. 280 n. 48.

23 See also J.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 116. I thus partially disagree with Becker, whose emphasis on 'Jewish' and 'Pagan' backgrounds leads him to imagine a 'subtle critique' of the μάγοι here (Becker, "Μάγοι," 104; cf. P. Busch, *Magie in neutestamentlicher Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 103–109). On the 'divinatory' association with μάγοι, including solar divination, see J. Bremmer, "The Birth of the Term 'Magic,'" *ZPE* 126 (1999): 1–12, esp. 5.

24 Bremmer, "Birth of the Term 'Magic,'" 2. Rives, "*Magus* and its Cognates," 67. Rives also highlights the overlapping semantic relationship between the Greek μάγος and the Latin *magus* (idem, 75).

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3.1.2 Illegitimate Ritual in the Acts of the Apostles

'Magic' has become an important theme in the study of the canonical Acts of the Apostles.[25] Yet, the redactor of this text does not present a coherent picture of illicit ritual and tends to leave out the details of the ritual practices themselves.[26] In every case, the ostensibly illicit ritual supports another, more general point or theme (esp. monetary improprieties and interference with the missions of the apostles). For instance, despite the prevailing tendency in scholarship to understand the story of Simon (Acts 8:9–25) as a premiere instantiation of what modern scholars imagine to be magic,[27] the redactor's composite story does not focus on or explain the nature of μαγεύω or μαγεία, does not condemn the μαγ-word group outright, and does not associate μαγεύω or μαγεία with evil spirits (contrast Acts 16:16–24 [see below]).[28] Instead, Simon is presented in the first part of the story (Acts 8:9–13) as a miracle performer, who initially deceives audiences through his μαγεία into thinking that he is great. He is then dumbfounded when confronted by Philip's superior preternatural skills, eventually becoming baptized and following Philip. The presentation of Simon changes considerably in the second part of the story (Acts 8:14–25), where he comes under the condemnation of Peter for trying to buy the ability to give the Holy Spirit to the people through the laying on of hands.[29] It should be stressed that μαγεία and its cognates are conspicuously

25 The literature on "magic" in Acts is immense. See, for instance, the following monographs: S.R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); H.-J. Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. B. McNeil (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); A.M. Reimer, *Miracle and Magic: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002).

26 I plan on developing the argument presented here in a future publication.

27 K. Stratton, "The Rhetoric or 'Magic' in Early Christian Discourse: Gender, Power, and the Construction of 'Heresy,'" in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. T. Penner and C. Vander Stichele (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 89–114 at 98; J. Bremmer, "Narrating Witchcraft: The Apostle Peter and Simon Magus in Early Christianity," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 14 (2019), forthcoming.

28 *Contra* Garrett, there is no evidence of Satan lurking behind the Simon story (Garrett, *Demise*, 74–75). On the redactional layers and possible sources of this story in Acts (and a convenient summary of relevant scholarship), see S. Haar, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 71–83. As Haar concludes (82), it is clear that the redactor of Acts has joined together at least two sources: a Philip/Simon source (cf. Acts 8:5–13) and a Peter/Simon source (cf. Acts 8:14–25).

29 Some scholars have argued that Simon was attempting to buy this 'spiritual gift' in order to sell it as part of his 'magical' occupation: e.g., G.H. Twelftree, "Jesus and Magic in Luke-Acts," in *Jesus and Paul: Global Perspectives in Honor of James D. G. Dunn. A Festschrift for his 70th Birthday*, ed. B.J. Oropeza, C.K. Robertson, D.C. Mohrmann (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 46–58, at 49; D. Marguerat, "Magic and Miracle in the Acts of the Apostles,"

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absent from this part of the story. In the end, Simon's condemnation is ultimately about the relationship between monetary exchange and divine gifts.[30] The term μαγεία emerges in the first part of the Simon story as merely covering a kind of ostentatious spectacle. To the extent that it figures into the second part of the story as an implicit element, Acts' version of μαγεία might also be characterized as a domain of activity used by people with improper social and economic proclivities.[31]

In the story of Bar-Jesus/Elymas (Acts 13:4–12)—who is called a μάγος and 'Jewish false prophet' (ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον)—the redactor condemns this figure for his anti-missiological activities. We learn that Barnabas and Paul—accompanied by John Mark—encountered Elymas in Paphos while preaching in local synagogues throughout the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4–5). We are further told that this Elymas was with a proconsul named Sergius Paulus, who had summoned Paul and Barnabas in order to hear their message. The story concludes with Elymas' attempt to thwart the proselytizing efforts of the prophetic protagonists (Acts 13:7–8). In response, Paul directs a curse against Elymas that results in his temporary blindness. This amazing action, so we are told, prompts faith in Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:12).

In this story, the title ψευδοπροφήτης overshadows the μάγος label since the former places Elymas in direct contrast to Paul and Barnabas, who are explicitly called prophets (Acts 13:1).[32] The title μάγος plays an unclear role in the narrative, perhaps signifying charlatan or fake,[33] indicating a kind of profession,[34] or even carrying a humorous or ironic tone—the μάγος Elymas, who presumably healed several people, perhaps even of eye problems, and

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in *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, ed. T. Klutz (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 100–24 at 119; Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 20–21. In the text, however, Peter condemns Simon explicitly for trying to 'obtain' (κτάομαι) this 'gift' (δωρεάν) 'with money' (διὰ χρημάτων). The text says nothing about what Simon would presumably do with the gift once he receives it.

30 For the redactor's promoted economic program, which emphasizes the sharing of resources, see Acts 4:32–37. The seriousness of violating this economic program is evident in Acts 5:3–4, 10, in which Peter directs a fatal curse against a certain Ananias and his wife Sapphira for keeping *some* of the proceeds from their property sale.

31 For this broader trope, see e.g., Plato, *Respublica*, 2.364; Sophocles, *Antigone*, 1055; Cicero, *Divinatione*, 1.58; Josephus, *Antiquitates*, 6.48; 18.65–80.

32 While this passage preserves the only instance in Acts of the term 'false prophet,' 'prophet' (προφήτης) is used several times in this book (Acts 2:16, 30; 3:18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25; 7:37, 42, 48, 52; 8:28, 30, 34; 10: 43; 11: 27; 13:1, 15, 20, 27; 21:10; 28:25).

33 This interpretation is perhaps supported by Paul's accusation in Acts 13:10 that Elymas was "full of all deceit and fraud" (παντὸς δόλου καὶ πάσης ῥᾳδιουργίας).

34 Twelftree, "Jesus and Magic," 50. See also D.S. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

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performed several curses, becomes blind based on the imprecations of Paul.[35] Whatever the case might have been, illicit ritual does not emerge as an observable feature or theme in this text.

In the other stories that modern scholars have associated with a general notion of extra-Christian 'magic,' the μάγ-stem does not appear. It should be stressed that the isolation and linking of all these stories/terms derives more from contemporary assumptions about the English term 'magic' and its range of activities than from the text of Acts itself;[36] the redactor nowhere draws an explicit connection between these narratives nor between μάγος (and its cognates) and the other terms used. The story of the Seven Sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13–17) is a comedic passage against people (specifically Jews) outside of the community, not against illicit ritual.[37] After a brief narrative about the preternatural powers of the fabric touching Paul's body (Acts 19:11–12), the redactor tells us about seven sons of a Jewish high priest (Sceva), who attempt to exorcize a demon by calling upon "Jesus whom Paul proclaims."[38] Their efforts are ultimately thwarted when, in response to their adjurations, the demons state that they do not recognize these exorcists, and the demon-possessed man overpowers them. In the end, the sons of Sceva run away naked and injured (Acts 19:16).[39] The redactor does not highlight the part of the antagonists' exorcistic adjuration, which is comparable with the ὁρκίζω formulas used in the Greek Magical Papyri.[40] Instead, he places the emphasis—via the demons—on the

1994) 157–70; H. Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 105.

35 On the role of humor in this passage, see K. Backhaus, "Transformation durch Humor: Die Komödisierung von Tradition in der Apostelgeschichte," in *Aneignung durch Transformation: Beiträge zur Analyse von Überlieferungsprozessen im frühen Christentum; Festschrift für Michael Theobald*, ed. W. Eisele, C. Schaefer, and H.-U. Weidemann (Freiburg: Herder, 2013) 209–37 at 228.

36 A wide range of scholars have treated the following texts together with the Simon and Elymas narratives under the rubric 'magic' (e.g, Garrett, *Demise*; Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*; Twelftree, "Jesus and Magic").

37 On the role of humor in this passage, see R. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 474–78; M. Bates, "Why do the Seven Sons of Sceva Fail? Exorcism, Magic, and Oath Enforcement in Acts 19,13–17," *RB* 118 (2011) 408–21 at 419–20; Backhaus, "Transformation durch Humor," 229. Pervo contends that this passage is a parody of Luke 8:26–39/Mark 5:1–20 (Pervo, *Acts* 476).

38 Acts 19:13. The full formula they use is recorded as follows: "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims (ὁρκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν Παῦλος κηρύσσει)."

39 It is possible that this reference harkens back to the overcoming of the strong man in Lk 11:21 (see Garrett, *Demise* 93, 98).

40 The ὁρκίζω ὑμᾶς/σε formula was relatively common in late antique exorcistic, curative, and protective rituals (e.g., *PGM* IV. 290; *PGM* XVI. 27; P. Heid. 1101, P. Rain. 1). Cf. Mk 5:7. It was, however, often used simply for acquiring the assistance of supernatural beings

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improper references to Jesus and Paul by outsiders.[41] It should probably not surprise us that the redactor does not focus on—much less condemn—the ritual performance of these exorcists *per se*; Paul himself is said to have used a similar divine invocation in his exorcism of the spirit in the slave girl (Acts 16:18 [see below]).[42]

The brief narrative in Acts 19:19 about the Ephesians, who stopped practicing περίεργος[43] and publically burned their scrolls (βίβλοι),[44] does not emphasize the textual content of the artifacts (e.g., scrolls containing illicit ritual formulae), but their *materiality* and monetary value. The text only tells us about the extremely high value of these objects (fifty thousand pieces of silver in total). Rather than reflecting the contents of some 'magical' book, therefore,[45] the

(cf. A. Zografou, "Les formules d'adjuration dans les Papyrus Grecs Magiques," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*, ed. M. de Haro Sanchez (Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2015), 267–80).

41 For similar interpretations, see E. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 499; C.K. Barrett, *Acts*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994–1998), 2:910. This insider/outsider emphasis continues in Acts 19:17: "When this became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, everyone was awestruck; and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised" (NRSV).

42 I thus partially disagree with Bates, "Seven Sons," 418, who not only highlights the assumed problem with the non-Christian Sons of Sceva using Jesus' name, but also emphasizes the importance of ritual technique to the story (Bates, "Seven Sons," 413–20).

43 The semantic range of περίεργος in the New Testament period primarily extended to the spheres of curiosity, meddlesomeness, and elaborateness/superfluousness. On the relationship between περίεργος and curiosity, see P.G. Walsh, "The Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity (Plutarch to Augustine)," *Greece & Rome* 25 (1988): 73–85 at 75. On the problems with 'curiosity' in early Christian antiquity more generally, see T. Berzon, *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016) 156–83. In what is one of the temporally closest analogues to Acts 19:19, 1 Tim. 5:13, the plural substantive adjective περίεργοι occurs in conjunction with φλύαροι ('gossips') within a discussion about older widows moving from house to house engaging in various forms of inappropriate conversation (W.D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 2000), 294; cf. G. Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of *Ad Hoc* Documents," *JETS* 28 (1985): 141–51 at 144 n. 9).

44 On book burning in early Christianity, see now D. Rohmann, *Christianity, Book-Burning and Censorship in Late Antiquity: Studies in Text and Transmission* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016). See also W. Speyer, *Büchervernichtung und Zensur des Geistes bei Heiden, Juden und Christen* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981).

45 *Contra* Dickie, *Magic*, 157. The clearest evidence for the association between περίεργα and terms, such as γοητεία and μαγεία, comes from later Christian discourse, which, as we will see, reflects a subsequent phrase in the 'Christian' understanding of illicit ritual (e.g., Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.* = *Adversus Haereses*, 1.23.4; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2.51; 7.4; *Acts of John* 36.6). Vettius Valens also uses the term as part of his complex astrological treatise (e.g., *Anthologia*, 7.30). It is important to note, however, that Vettius Valens does

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term περίεργος here seems to denote ostentatious behavior,[46] specifically owning and presumably displaying expensive scrolls.[47] Such displays of wealth and social hierarchy would have run counter to the social program promoted in Acts (cf. Acts 4:34; 5:1–5; 8:5–25).[48]

The story in Acts 16:16–24, in which Paul confronts a possessed slave girl (παιδίσκη) who was functioning as a ritual expert, constitutes the only passage in Acts, in which the illicitness or evil of the ritual practice itself constitutes a manifest feature. The redactor tells us that this girl had a πνεῦμα πύθωνα (literally 'python spirit'),[49] which gave her the ability to predict the future (cf. μαντευομένη). The verb μαντεύομαι and the nouns μαντεῖα and μάντις were associated in the Greco-Roman world with diverse predictive and prophetic rituals, including those involving the interpretations of dreams, birds, and bowls.[50] Although Acts does not mention the specific kind of mantic activity the girl performed, the text reveals that the girl's mantic abilities were directly related to her spirit possession (Acts 16:16); when Paul removes the presumably evil spirit through a divine invocation (Acts 16:18), she can no longer serve as a ritual specialist. Despite the presence of illicit ritual in this narrative, the redactor primarily stresses that this possessed girl—like Elymas—interfered with the mission of Paul and his followers.[51]

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not connect περίεργος to the use of books. The term περιεργίας is connected with written forms of divination in a letter to a group of district governors, dating to 198/9 CE (P. Yale inv. 299; cf. J. Rea, "A New Version of P. Yale Inv. 299," *ZPE* 27 (1977): 151–56). Of course, this letter was written later than the book of Acts.

46 The Greek physician Hippocrates (ca. 460–370 BCE) likewise warned medical practitioners not to attract patients through the wearing of 'elaborate headgear' (προσκύρησιν ἀκέσιος) and '*elaborate* perfume' (ὀδμή *περίεργος*) (*Praeceptiones*, 10, trans. W.H.S. Jones, Loeb Classical Library 147 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923). Similarly, in Plutarch, *De fortuna Alexandri*, 2.5 περίεργος is juxtaposed with κατακορής (excessive, extravagant) to describe the celebrations of the Edonian and Thracian women on Mount Haemus.

47 Scott Shauf appropriately thus notes that 'if exegetes were not so quick to see magic in 19:13–17, more nuanced analyses of vv. 18–20 would result' (S. Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005], 227).

48 See also the emphasis on money in the story of Demetrius later in the same chapter (Acts 19: 24–41).

49 On the meaning of πύθωνα, see e.g., Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 65–67.

50 For relevant sources, see those cited in Twelftree, "Jesus and Magic," 51 n. 31. For μάντις as a common *summum genus* for various predictive rituals, see S.I. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 109.

51 In this vein, it was probably relevant to the redactor that this word group characterized wrongdoers and was expressly forbidden in several passages from the Septuagint (e.g., Deut. 18:10; Josh 13:22; 1 Sam. 6:2; 28:8; 2 Kgs 17:17; Ezek. 12:24; 13:6, 23; 21:22–28; Mic 3:7, 11; Zech 10:2).

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3.1.3 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Ritual in New Testament Narratives: Preliminary Conclusions

The narratives from Matthew and the Acts of the Apostles leave us with many unanswered questions about the meaning and significance of various terms—e.g., μάγοι, μαντεύομαι, and περίεργος. At the very least, however, this evidence implies that the earliest narrators in the Jesus movement were hardly preoccupied with illegitimate ritual.[52] This lack of interest in or awareness of ritual practice, however, would not last. Subsequent generations of Christians often drew attention to the ritual contours in their stories.[53]

3.1.4 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Ritual in Later Christian Narratives

Narrative depictions of and short historical references to unsavory characters and rituals peppered many early Christian writings after the New Testament. Many of these texts will be treated in Section 4; however, it is worth highlighting a few sources here that offer special insight into the development of early Christian notions of illegitimate ritual.

Discussions about inappropriate ritual practice, for instance, figured prominently in the late antique vitae of famous ascetics, typically as a strategy for distinguishing approved rituals (i.e., Christian) from unapproved ones (i.e., heathen). In his fourth-century *Life of Antony*, for instance, Athanasius uses μαγεία and φαρμακεία as foils to Antony's appropriate ritual practices. Thus, Athanasius proclaims—through the voice of Antony: "[w]here the sign of the

52 Even the three versions of the so-called 'Beelzebul Controversy' (Mark 3:22–30; Matt 12:24–29; Luke 11:15–22), which highlight the ambiguous lines between legitimate and illegitimate ritual practices, do not stress the 'ritual' dimensions of exorcism. In the Markan version of this story, the scribes accuse Jesus of casting out demons on the authority of Beelzebul. The Markan Jesus provides a circuitous response to his antagonistic interlocutors; he highlights through 'parables' or 'comparisons' (παραβολαῖς) that an exorcism with such putatively satanic origins would be self-contradictory (for the translation of παραβολή as 'comparison,' see A.Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007], 231). The Matthean and Lukan versions of this story likewise legitimate Jesus' exorcistic ministry on account of its source and authority in God. For the three evangelists, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a ritual stems from its divine or satanic/demonic origin respectively, not from the contours of a particular gesture or spoken formula. In short, none of the Gospel writers stress in their retellings of the 'Beelzebul Controversy' the ritual aspects of Jesus' exorcisms.

53 E.g., the sixth-century CE *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* (37–38) depicts a showdown between a local 'sorcerer' named Theodotus and Theodore. On the implications of this story for understanding competing ritual experts in local contexts, see Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," 276–77.

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cross is made, μαγεία wastes away and φαρμακεία does not work."[54] I will treat φαρμακεία (here: an illicit ritual involving material substances) in more detail in the next section. For now, it is worth highlighting that, for Athanasius, the cross gesture not only constituted an appropriate substitution for rituals associated with μαγεία and φαρμακεία, but this Christian practice functioned as the antidote to them.[55] Subsequent lives of saints and monks, such as Jerome's *Life of Hilarion*,[56] followed Athanasius's immensely popular account of Antony in contrasting their heroes, who use approved gestures and rituals, with illicit specialists and their rituals.[57] It should be noted that, although Athanasius, Jerome, and some of their peers presented the rituals of their heroes as distinguishable from those of illicit practitioners, the ritual boundaries between holy men and their counterparts were much more ambiguous in other early Christian narratives and in social reality.[58]

54 *Vita Antoni*, 78.5 (SC 400:334); translation based on J. Wortley, "Some Light on Magic and Magicians in Late Antiquity," *GRBS* 42 (2001): 289–307. Cf. Athanasius, *de Incarnatio Verbi Dei* 47–48.

55 It is likely, therefore, that Athanasius had in mind the negative or harmful aspects of μαγεία and φαρμακεία—and not, for instance, their associations with healing. On the relationships between Antony's ritual use of scripture and biblical amulets, see J.E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 59; Arkadiy Avdokhin, *The Quest for Orthopraxy: Narrating and Negotiating Christian Prayers and Hymns in Late Antiquity* (PhD diss., King's College London, 2016), 221–54.

56 Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis*, 3.8, 8.8; 7.4, 9.3; 10.5, 8; 11.3–13; 12.1–9; 32.2 (cf. S. Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-Century Syria* [London; New York: Routledge, 2007], 43–45, 88–91, 150–51. For the literary relationship between the vitae of Athanasius and Hilarion, see P. Leclerc, "Jérôme et le genre littéraire de la biographie monastique," in *Jérôme, Trois vies de moines* (*Paul, Malchus, Hilarion*), ed. E.M. Morales and P. Leclerc (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2007), 33–72 at 48–51.

57 On the influence of Antony's vita on subsequent hagiographical literature, see e.g., W. Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 97–100. On the power of the cross, see Cyril of Jerusalem, *Baptismal Instruction* 13.36, 40; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, 1.2.30.7. The cross was also believed to cause harm if used inappropriately (cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 1.4). On the relationship between saints' lives and 'magic,' see H.J. Magoulias, "The Lives of Byzantine Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Magic in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D.: Sorcery, Relics and Icons," *Byzantion* 37 (1967): 228–69; M.W. Dickie, "Narrative-Patterns in Christian Hagiography," *GRBS* 40 (1999): 86–91.

58 D. Frankfurter, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 480–500 at 498. Cf. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, 17.6–9 (*Historia Monachorum*, 21.17). On the lengths to which Athanasius and Jerome went to distinguish the rituals of holy men from those of illicit specialists, see de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*, 31–32.

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Perhaps the clearest example of the later narrative development of illicit ritual is found in the contest between Simon Magus and Peter in the disparate traditions often called the *Apocryphal Acts of Peter* (*APt*).[59] One such tradition is preserved in a sixth or seventh-century CE Latin Manuscript (*Actus Vercellenses* [hereafter *Actus Ver.*]), which expands considerably the story of Simon—at least when compared to the canonical Acts of the Apostles.[60] Drawing on the conventions of the ancient novel[61] and on prior Christian traditions,[62] *Actus Ver.* includes a showdown between the Apostle Peter and Simon. This account not only details the numerous marvels accomplished by the protagonist and antagonist respectively, but also includes miracles wrought by unexpected characters, such as a talking dog (*Actus Ver.* 12) and a talking infant (*Actus Ver.* 15).[63] The showdown comes to an end when Simon flies over Rome, only to be brought crashing down though the prayers of Peter (*Actus Ver.* 32). Although Simon first only suffers a broken leg (albeit in three places), he eventually dies in Aricia (*Actus Ver.* 32).

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59 On the problem with envisioning a single text/tradition of the *APt*, see M.C. Baldwin, *Whose* Acts of *Peter? Text and Historical Context of the Actus Vercellenses* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 26–62.

60 R.A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, eds. *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hermann Mendessohn, 1891); Reprint, (New York: G. Olms, 1972), 1:45–103. Among the other relatively early traditions are a Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 849) and a Coptic fragment (P.Ber. 8502). For analyses of 'magic' and Simon Magus in the *APt/Actus Ver.*, see J.N. Bremmer, "Magic in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 51–70; G.P. Luttikhuizen, "Simon Magus as a Narrative Figure in the Acts of Peter," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles, and Gnosticism*, ed. J.N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 39–51.

61 On the relationship between *APt/Actus Ver.* and ancient novels, see C. Thomas, *The Acts of Peter, Gospel Literature, and the Ancient Novel: Rewriting the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

62 For instance, the redactor draws on the Acts of the Apostles in introducing Simon, relaying that Simon claims to be 'the great power of God' (*Actus Ver.* 4; cf. Acts 8:9–10). The reference to Simon flying (*APt* 32) is likewise attested in the Pseudo-Clementine literature (*Recognitions*, 2.9 [cf. 3.47, 57]) and in the *Didascalia* (6.7–9). For discussion, see Bremmer, "Apocryphal Acts," 64. The alleged statue "to Simon, the young god" (cf. *Actus Ver.* 10, Elliott 407) seems to reflect a similar tradition as Justin Martyr's curious reference to the Roman erection of a statue for 'the god Simon' (Justin, *1 Apologia,* 26). On the possibility that this tradition impacted the presentation of Simon in the *APt/Actus Ver.*, see Luttikhuizen, "Simon Magus," 41 n. 10. On the subsequent traditions of Simon more generally, see now Bremmer, "Narrating Witchcraft."

63 On the performance of miracles by animals in the *Actus Ver.*, see J. Spitler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: The Wild Kingdom of Early Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 126–55.

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Like the canonical Acts of the Apostles, *Actus Ver.* portrays a caricature of Simon. While the latter is a quite fanciful text, the depiction of Simon offers insights into the development of a notion of (illicit) ritual in Christian literary imagination. For instance, although *magia* is not explicitly defined in *Actus Ver.*, this text reveals a complex understanding of the term. In contrast to Peter's powerful deeds, which are universally depicted as stemming from his connection to the true God,[64] Simon's deeds of *magia* are portrayed alternatively as 'real' (though demonic)[65] and fraudulent.[66]

In addition, by comparing the Simon narratives in *Actus Ver.* and in the canonical Acts of the Apostles we gain insight into developments in Christian ritual discourse. The scribe behind the *Actus Ver.* deploys a host of vocabulary to characterize the ritual activities of Simon, including: *magus* (e.g., *Actus Ver.* 5; 28); *magia* (e.g., *Actus Ver.* 17; 28); *magica arte* (e.g., *Actus Ver.* 17; 23); (*magico*) *carmine* (*Actus Ver*. 16; 17; 18); and *magica figmenta* (*Actus Ver.* 16). In contrast to the story in Acts, *magia* here also constitutes a key component in the narrative, playing a major role in shaping the evil of Simon's character. Beyond its key function in his miraculous confrontation with Peter, Simon's ritual expertise is explicitly connected to deception (*Actus Ver.* 24) and theft (*Actus Ver.* 17; 18) and reveals his demonic/satanic alliance (e.g., *Actus Ver.* 5; 17; 32). This latter demonic dimension also represents a key difference between the two accounts. In contrast to Acts—in which only μαντεύομαι is explicitly connected with demons—*Actus Ver.* notes that *magia* works through satanic/demonic agency (*Actus Ver.* 18). As we will see, the robust presentation of illicit ritual in *Actus Ver.* worked in dialogue with a growing interest in religious difference and the concomitant taxonomization of (illicit) ritual activity during late antiquity.

3.1.5 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Ritual and Early Christian Narratives: Conclusions

The narratives discussed in this section have disclosed significant shifts in the depictions of illicit and ambiguous ritual during the first centuries of Christianity. In the narratives from the formative period, the ritual characteristics of μαγεία and the like typically do not play major roles in the stories. Although these texts do not necessarily reveal the totality of their authors'

64 For instance, in *Actus Ver.* 26, Peter states that Jesus Christ performed 'great signs and wonders through me' (*et tanta signa et prodigia fasciens per me*).

65 E.g., *Actus Ver.* 32.

66 E.g., *Actus Ver.* 17.

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ideas on ritual, there does not seem to be any evidence that the New Testament writers had a clear sense of illegitimate ritual acts (as distinct from other undesirable traits and behaviors). The astrological methods of the exotic μάγοι, for instance, are not mentioned anywhere in the Matthean account. In Acts, the *tacit* activities of Simon, which result in ostentatious show, are simply glossed as μαγεία. In fact, μαντεύομαι in Acts 16:16–24 represents the sole case in which the illicitness of the *ritual* activity emerges as a manifest feature of a story. The redactor directly links the girl's mantic activities with spirit possession. Yet, even in this passage, the specific kind of ritual the girl performed remains a mystery. In Acts more generally, the rites, formulae, and gestures that support the domains of exorcism, healing, and preternatural spectacle were inherently ambiguous. Indeed, it is primarily the identity of the performer—especially his or her relation (or lack thereof) to the Jesus movement and its mores—that determines whether the rites, gestures, and formulae are positive or negative. Thus, when Paul performs an exorcism through a divine invocation, it is successful and worthy of praise; when the Sons of Sceva attempt a similar exorcism through divine invocation, it is unsuccessful and mocked in the text. In this regard, the specific exorcistic formula mentioned in the Sons of Sceva narrative is not framed as an illegitimate ritual *per se*, but merely supports the story's primary goal of distinguishing community insiders from outsiders (especially Jews).

To be sure, the following generations of narrators and scribes by no means processed these issues according to modern notions of magic or ritual. Consequently, many of their texts—just like in the Acts of the Apostles—presuppose considerable overlaps between the rites, gestures, and formulae of holy men and those of illicit ritual experts. What is more, illicit rituals in these narratives are typically not framed as ends in and of themselves, but tend to buttress a larger motif (e.g., the need to separate from heathens; the 'true' power of God). Yet some later Christian writers, such as the scribe behind the *Actus Ver.*, emphasized to a much greater degree the contrasts between legitimate and illegitimate rituals and ritual actors. Toward this end, these later writers not only assigned to ritual acts a more central role for character development, but they also established—or appropriated—robust vocabularies and taxonomies to support their preferred distinctions between licit and illicit rituals. Such writers thus embody a considerable shift in Christian notions of illegitimate ritual. As we will see, this development worked in dialogue with an expanding and imperially sanctioned Christian ritual culture during late antiquity that defined itself in contrast to a wide range of Others. I will now examine how these and other developments manifested in lists of inappropriate or ambiguous behaviors/rituals.

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3.2 *Lists and Catalogues*

It is not surprising that lists of sins and errors—a genre of moral discourse inherited from Jewish wisdom literature—were used by many followers of Jesus. The earliest lists found in the texts of the nascent Jesus movements included a wide range of wrongdoings that extended well beyond the domain of ritual. Over time, however, early Christian texts incorporated lists that increasingly specified illegitimate ritual practices and actors (e.g., μαγεία, ἐπαοιδός, μαθηματικός, and their cognates).[67] The list is thus a particularly useful site for tracing the evolution of Christian taxonomies and, consequently, conceptions of illicit ritual practice.[68]

3.2.1 The Spirit, The Flesh, and Illegitimate Ritual (Galatians 5:16–26)

The epistles of Paul contain the earliest extant sin lists of the Jesus movements. To be sure, Paul's choice of this form was not made in a vacuum: again, Paul's (im)moral lists were part of a much larger trend within the Hellenistic world that included Wisdom (Wis. 12:3–7) and the works of Philo of Alexandria (*De Cherubim*, 92).[69]

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul stressed the need for community support, cooperation, and unity. As part of this motif, Paul drew his famous dichotomy between the spirit and the flesh (Gal. 5:16–26). He enumerated the various 'works of the flesh' (τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός), including in his list φαρμακεία ('sorcery' [NRSV]) and φθόνοι ('envy' [NRSV]). The other items in the works-of-the-flesh list include both concrete actions (e.g., 'fornication' [πορνεία]) and

67 Of course, as has been well documented, lists also played an important role in the ritual texts we identify with the category 'magic.' Indeed, lists of deities, ingredients, and even biblical passages pepper the texts of late antique *grimoires* and applied artifacts. On the importance of such lists in ostensibly 'magical' contexts, see R. Gordon, "'What's in a List?' Listing in Greek and Graeco–Roman Malign Magical Texts," in *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4–8 May 1997*, ed. D.R. Jordan, H. Montgomery, and E. Thomassen (Bergen: The Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 239–77.

68 This emphasis on early Christian taxonomies works in dialogue with research in the cognitive sciences, which has shown that attention to classification systems is essential for understanding the conception of a given idea (G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Human Mind* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987], 5–11). On the importance of lists and catalogues in early Christian heresiological classification, see G. Smith, *Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Berzon, *Classifying Christians*, 218–45.

69 For a convenient discussion of such vice (and virtue) lists, see H.D. Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 281–82.

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more abstract qualities (e.g., 'anger' [θυμοί]), which might eventually lead to ἔργα. What all the terms have in common—especially when we take into consideration Paul's broader social program in Galatians—are their harmful effects on individuals within the community and/or on the community at large.

Within the Greco-Roman world, φθόνος was a negative emotion that, in its most general sense, referred to the desire for a rival, a compatriot, or even a friend to be deprived of their valued possessions and fortune.[70] This wish for the downfall of others based on their goods and successes crossed the domains of individual psychology, interpersonal exchange, and social relations. In many contexts, however, φθόνος also involved gestures we might usefully call ritual. In particular, φθόνος was often thought in antiquity to manifest itself in the casting of the evil eye.[71] This link between φθόνος and the evil eye in the broader Greco-Roman world is worth considering in our analysis of Galatians since Paul has already used in Gal. 3:1 the verb βασκαίνω ('bewitch' [NRSV]), which formed part of the technical vocabulary of the evil-eye phenomenon.[72] Paul's acute knowledge of evil-eye language increases the probability that φθόνος in Gal. 5:20 and φθονοῦντες in Gal. 5:26 implied some sort of cursing activity that accompanied the evil eye. Within the context of Galatians, however, the problem with φθόνος, φθονοῦντες, and the resulting evil eye would not have been their demonic or magical associations. Instead, these ritual activities necessitated aggressive and counter-communal interactions between believers—akin to ἔρις ('strife' [NRSV]) and ἐριθεῖαι ('quarrels' [NRSV]) in Gal. 5:20—and thus constituted the antithesis of 'the fruits of the spirit' (cf. Gal. 5:22–24).

The term φαρμακεία—typically translated as 'sorcery'—was often used ambiguously (as here), thus providing the scholar with little evidence to interpret.[73] In the court of the Areopagus in Athens, φαρμακεία could denote a form of homicide, which roughly corresponds to our notion of poisoning.[74] But already in the Classical period φαρμακεία also acquired a ritual dimension,

70 On the cognitive, linguistic, and social dimensions of φθόνος in antiquity (with an emphasis on ancient Athens), see E. Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Ancient Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 71–163. See also J.H. Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, 3 vols. (Eugene, OR: James Clark & Co., 2016), 2: 84.

71 Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye*, 2:82–95. See also K.M.D. Dunbabin and M.W. Dickie, "Invidia Rumpantur Pectora: The Iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art," *JAC* 26 (1983) 7–37.

72 Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye*, 3:212–64.

73 Pharr, "The Interdiction of Magic," 273.

74 Dickie, *Magic*, 54. Dickie speculates that, because of the dual meaning of φαρμακεία, practitioners might also have been punished.

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including the ritual use of material substances (something like 'potion'), and was, accordingly, juxtaposed with terms, such as ἐπωιδαί ('spells, charms').[75]

The fact that Paul probably referred to ritual impropriety vis-a-vis the φθόνος word group increases the likelihood that he emphasized the ritual dimensions of φαρμακεία here as well. What is more, an inscription from a private association in Philadelphia (first century BCE) juxtaposes 'φάρμακον πονηρόν' with 'ἐπωιδὰς πονηράς' ('malevolent charms') as part of a similar list of vices, including sexual misdeeds.[76] In short, the NRSV's translation of φαρμακεία as 'sorcery' might not be completely off the mark. But even if we ought to understand φαρμακεία as sorcery, the context again suggests that Paul's condemnation of this ritual practice for the Galatians would have been primarily oriented around its negative impact on the community.

3.2.2 Φαρμακεία and Φάρμακος in the Lists of Revelation

Scholars have long highlighted the presence of illicit ritual in the Book of Revelation.[77] While much of this scholarship has focused on the redactor's alleged utilization of such rituals, the parameters of this study demand that I restrict my analysis to the redactor's understanding of illegitimate ritual.[78] In particular, I focus my attention on the lists in Revelation in which φαρμακεία and φάρμακος occur.

As we have already seen, φαρμακεία could imply poisoning and/or illicit ritual activity involving material substances. The homicidal dimension of φαρμακεία is important for our present discussion because, as we will see, the redactor of Revelation consistently juxtaposes φαρμακεία/φάρμακος with terms for violence.

The terms φαρμακεία or φάρμακος occur in four passages in Revelation (Rev. 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15). In three of these passages the φαρμ-stem occurs in lists: Rev. 9:21 records that, in addition to participating in different forms

75 E.g., Plato, *Theaetetus* 149c–d.

76 For the translation and discussion of this inscription, see D. Aune, *Revelation: 17–22* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1132.

77 E.g., Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1555; Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 144. For a recent discussion of the issues involved, see R.L. Thomas, *Magical Motifs in the Book of Revelation* (London: T&T Clark, 2010).

78 The imposition of contemporary notions of 'magic' onto this text have prompted some scholars to contend that there is a tension in the Book of Revelation. For instance, Thomas writes, "It is of note that the redactor of Revelation seems unequivocally opposed to φαρμακεία, and yet, he seems to embrace concepts and terms commonly associated with magic" (Thomas, *Magical Motifs*, 2–3).

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of idolatry,[79] the two thirds of humanity not killed by divine decree "did not repent of their murders (φόνων) nor of their sorceries (φαρμάκων) nor of their sexual sin (πορνείας) nor of their thefts (κλεμμάτων) (9:21);"[80] in Rev. 22:15, the redactor also places φάρμακοι in a similar list of deviants—including 'fornicators' (πόρνοι) and 'murderers' (φονεῖς) and 'idolaters' (εἰδωλολάτραι). Rev. 21:8 likewise places in sequence the φόνος, πόρνος, and φάρμακος as part of a more extensive list of deviants who will find a fiery end.

It is worth stressing that φαρμακεία/φάρμακος is consistently placed in these lists alongside πορνείας/πόρνοι and, perhaps more importantly, φόνος/φονεύς (9:21; 21:8; 22:15). The connection between φαρμακεία/φάρμακος and violent activity is further highlighted in Rev. 18:23–24. In this passage, an angel proclaims the destruction of Babylon/Rome (Rev. 18:22) and specifies the reason for its destruction: because "your [Babylon's] merchants were the great people (μεγιστᾶνες) of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery (ἐν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου). And in you was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth (NRSV)." In addition to functioning as a kind of metaphor for the deceptive practices of 'Babylon' (Rev. 18:23), φαρμακεία is juxtaposed with language of violence; the final reason (i.e., the killing [σφάγω] of the prophets, saints, and others) is modified by the same ὅτι as the φαρμακεία clause, thus syntactically joining both reasons.[81] Although the lists we have discussed juxtapose φαρμακεία/φάρμακος with the noun φόνος/φονεύς, the verb σφάγω here likewise implies killing through violence.[82] It would seem, therefore, that the redactor draws a strong association between φαρμακεία/φάρμακος and violence.

The locations of φαρμακεία and φάρμακος within the rhetoric of Revelation make it clear that these terms refer to an illicit—and probably illegal—activity. In particular, each of the passages draws a connection between φαρμακεία/φάρμακος and violent bloodshed. At the same time, the list of similar vices—along with the juxtaposition of φαρμακεία and ἐπωιδὰς πονηράς—on the aforementioned inscription from Philadelphia (cf. Rev. 3:7) seems to increase

79 Rev. 9:20 lists "worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk."

80 Rev. 9:13–21 describes the plagues delivered upon the earth when the sixth angel sounded his trumpet. This angel receives a divine message to release the four angles who are bound at the Euphrates, so that they kill a third of mankind (9:14–15). We learn that the remaining two-thirds were unrepentant and thus engaged in the various improper behaviors described in 9:20–21.

81 Both clauses are likewise introduced by the preposition ἐν with a nominal dative construction.

82 See Aune, *Revelation*, 1010–11.

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the likelihood that the redactor of Revelation also envisioned a ritual component to φαρμακεία. Accordingly, Revelation should perhaps serve as a caution against imposing onto antiquity a strict distinction between the legal and ritual dimensions of φαρμακεία/φάρμακος.[83] This ritual aspect notwithstanding, it is worth highlighting that Revelation—like Galatians—situates φαρμακεία within a list of iniquities, neither specifying its performative aspects nor advancing an explicit connection between φαρμακεία and demons.

The tradition of listing sins, including the accumulation of illicit ritual practices, shifted considerably in the subsequent traditions of Jesus' followers (even traditions shortly after Galatians and Revelation). Such developments—which of course unfolded unevenly across time and space—worked in concert with several macro-level changes to the emerging Christian movements, including the appropriation of new genres, different concerns related to the increasing structure of ecclesial institutions, and the imperial sponsoring of Christianity. This emphasis on classifying others and their practices was not limited to illegitimate ritual practices but encompassed many areas of late antique culture.[84]

3.2.3 The Ritual Lists in the Two-Ways Tradition

Lists of illegitimate ritual, which differ considerably from the lists in Galatians and Revelation, are found in the *Didache* (*Did.*). This text, redacted around the turn of the second century CE, engages with illicit ritual as part of its appropriation of the widespread 'Two Ways' tradition (cf. *Did.* 1–6:2). Although this tradition had parallels with ethical teachings throughout the ancient Mediterranean world (e.g., Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, II.1.21–34), it was particularly prominent among the various Jewish communities of antiquity.[85] The final redactor of the *Didache* participated in this Jewish tradition, although he augmented it using language drawn from the early Jesus movements.[86] Thus,

83 On the problems with drawing hard-and-fast distinctions between poison and magic potion (cf. *veneficium*; φαρμακεία) as it pertains to ancient Roman law, see J.B. Rives, "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime," *Classical Antiquity* 22 (2003) 313–39 at 319–20.

84 A. Cameron, "Ascetic Closure and the End of Antiquity," in *Asceticism*, ed. V.L. Wimbush and R. Valantasis (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 147–61, esp. 156; Berzon, *Classifying Christians*.

85 E.g., 1QS 3:13–4:26; Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, IV. 108; Philo, *De Confusione Linguarum*, 117. On the relationship between the *Didache* and the Jewish Two-Ways tradition, see R.A. Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3: Barnabas and the Didache* (Toronto: T. Nelson Publishers, 1965); and H. Van de Sandt and D. Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 140–90.

86 On the relatively limited 'Christian' vocabulary in *Did.* 1–6:2, see Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 57. For the identification of this material with the early Jesus movement, see

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one finds in *Did.* 1:3b–2:1 various expressions reminiscent of statements of Jesus from the synoptic Gospels.[87]

The *Didache* includes the prohibitions οὐ μαγεύσεις and οὐ φαρμακεύσεις in immediate succession as part of an extensive list of sinful activities that are grouped under the rubric 'the second commandment of the teaching' (δευτέρα δὲ ἐντολὴ τῆς διδαχῆς) (*Did.* 2:1). The close proximity of these prohibitions seems to imply that their ritual contours were prominent. That the redactor was concerned with ritual practice is evident in *Did.* 3:4, where we find a command not to be an οἰωνοσκόπος ('a diviner')—as it leads to εἰδωλολατρίαν ('idolatry')—followed by a polysyndetonic list (with μηδέ) that condemns the ἐπαοιδός ('the one who performs incantations'), the μαθηματικός ('the astrologer'), and the participants in περικαθαίρων ('rites of purification').[88] It is possible that this sequence reflects contemporary Roman imperial discourse. Indeed, already in early imperial legislation, lexemes, such as *ars maleficia* and *superstitio*, were linked with *inter alia* illicit predictive and prophetic rites.[89] At the very least, however, the redactor has clearly understood all of the practices behind these titles as falling under some broader category, which we might tentatively deem 'illicit ritual.' The isolation of these illegitimate rituals into a single section represents an important development; however, it is also worth noting that this list is part of a larger section (*Did.* 3:1–10) devoted to various evils (cf. πονηρός), including lists prohibiting ὀργή ('anger'), ἐπιθυμία ([sexual] 'desire'), and ψεῦσμα ('lying'). The seriatim grouping of illegitimate ritual practices under a larger category of inappropriate behaviors is likewise reflected in *Did.* 5:1, in which μαγεῖαι and φαρμακίαι occur in immediate succession alongside a litany of other sins—including φόνοι ('murders') and μοιχεῖαι ('adulteries'). The sins in this case are classified under the rubric 'the way of death' (ἡ τοῦ θανάτου ὁδός).

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e.g., K. Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988) 65–66. On the redactional layers of the *Didache*, see Kraft, *Apostolic Fathers*, 59–65.

87 E.g., *Did.* 1:2 (e.g., Matt. 22:37; Matt. 7:12); *Did.* 1:3 (e.g., Luke 6:28; Matt. 5:44–57); *Did.* 1:4 (Matt. 5:39). These correspondences with the synoptic Gospels, however, probably do not reflect direct 'influence' or 'dependence' (see, for instance, H. Koester, *Synoptische Uberlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern* [Tübingen: Akademie-Verlag, 1957], 172; Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 64).

88 The translations of the *Didache* are taken from B. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2 vols, Loeb Classical Library 24–25 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1:421. On the problems with περικαθαίρων here, see W.L. Knox, "ΠΕΡΙΚΑΘΑΙΡΩΝ (Didache iii 4)," *JTS* 40 (1939): 146–49.

89 M. Salzman, "*Superstitio* in the *Codex Theodosianus* and the Persecution of Pagans," *VC* 41 (1987): 172–88 at 175; Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 332.

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The extant text of the *Didache* captures an important perspective on illicit ritual among certain second-century adherents to the Jesus movement. This text not only includes μαγεία in lists of inappropriate behaviors, but it also links φαρμακεία and μαγεία (*Did.* 2:1; 5:1) as well as other ritual practices (cf. *Did.* 3:4) under individual rubrics ('the second commandment of the teaching' and 'the way of death'). The *Didache*, which might in fact predate the less ritually oriented Acts of the Apostles, represents one line of early Christian discourse in which inappropriate rituals were beginning to be classified as a unit.[90]

Other early Christian texts that incorporated the Two Ways tradition likewise reflect this trend of linking illegitimate ritual practices.[91] The extant redaction of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, edited by a Jesus follower perhaps as early as the first half of the second century CE, places φαρμακεία and μαγεία in immediate succession in an extensive list of sins under the rubric 'the way of the black one' (ἡ τοῦ μέλανος ὁδός) (*Ep. Barn.* 20:1–8).[92] The Latin version of the *Doctrina apostolorum* prohibits under the same breath the practicing of *magica*[93] and *medicamenta mala* (*Doct. apost.* 2:2) and then tells believers to avoid the *mathematicus* and the *delustrator*, who lead one to *vanam superstitionem* (*Doct. apost.*, 3.4).[94] The so-called *Apostolic Tradition*, a collection of community rules that date at the latest to the fourth century CE,[95] is first preserved in a Coptic manuscript dating to ca. 500 CE.[96] In this manuscript, we find a list of ritual practitioners who ought to be excluded from baptism if they fail to cease their activities: e.g., the ⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ (μάγος), the ⲁⲥⲧⲣⲟⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ (ἀστρόλογος),

90 For the later dating of Acts, see e.g., the various essays in D.E. Smith and J.B. Tyson, eds., *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2013). This situation ought to remind us again that developments do not take place evenly across time and space.

91 On the relationships between these texts and the *Didache*, see Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 30–41.

92 Cf. *Testament of Reuben* 7. For the early dating of the Epistle of Barnabas, see Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2:6–7. On its redactional layers, see, for instance, Kraft, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1–21.

93 So reads ms. F. of the *Docrina apostolorum.* Ms. M of this text reads 'non mag<ica?> facies.' For an analysis of the latter reading, see K. Niederwimmer, "Doctrina apostolorum (Cod. Mellic. 597)," in *Theologia scientia eminens practica; F. Zerbst zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. H.C. Schmidt-Lauber (Vienna: Herder, 1979), 266–72 at 271.

94 See also *Apostolic Church Order* 10, ed. A. Stewart-Sykes, *The Apostolic Church Order: The Greek Text with Introduction, Translation and Annotation* (Strathfield, NSW: St. Paul's Publications, 2006), 94; *Epitome* (Stewart-Sykes, *Apostolic Church Order*, 117).

95 P. Bradshaw, M.E. Johnson, and L.E. Phillips, *Apostolic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 7–8, 13–15.

96 W. Till and J. Leipoldt, ed. *Der koptische Text der Kirchenordnung Hippolyts* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1954), 12.

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the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ (something like a 'fortune teller'), ⲡⲉⲧⲃⲱⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲣⲁⲥⲟⲩ ('the one who interprets dreams'), and ⲡⲉⲧⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲫⲩⲗⲁⲕⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ('the one who makes φυλακτήρια [see below]') (*Traditio apostolorum*, 16.14).[97] The illicit ritual dimensions associated with the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ are evident in *Pistis Sophia*. This text tells us that the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ are able to acquire accurate knowledge about the future from the deacons "when they *call upon* the name of the *archons* and *meet* them looking to the left" (ⲉⲩϣⲁⲛⲉⲡⲓⲕⲁⲗⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲛⲥⲉⲁⲡⲁⲛⲧⲁ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲥⲱϣ̄ⲧ̄ ⲉϩⲃⲟⲩⲣ).[98]

3.2.4 Ecclesiastical Canons

Closely overlapping with the materials in the *Doctrina apostolorum* and the *Apostolic Tradition* were the roughly contemporaneous lists in ecclesiastical canons that condemned various ritual practices.[99] One of the Coptic canons of Pseudo-Athanasius, which likely dates between 350–500 CE, commands congregants to avoid the ⲣⲉϥⲕⲁⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ,[100] the ⲣⲉϥⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ, the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ, and the ⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ or else suffer exclusion from the Eucharist for three years.[101] Another canon from this collection warns clergy (ⲕⲗⲏⲣⲓⲕⲟⲥ) not to possess books (ⲛ̀ϫⲱⲱⲙⲉ) of ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ (μαγεία).[102] Contrary to the ambiguous reference to 'books' associated with περίεργα in Acts 19:19, the use of the label ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ as well as the canon's relatively late date and its provenance in Egypt make it conceivable that the

97 Till and Leipoldt, *Kirchenordnung Hippolyts*, 12. This tradition of prohibiting practitioners of illicit rituals from participating in baptism and catechesis was relatively widespread in late antique and early medieval Christianity. The so-called eighth book of the Apostolic Constitutions—a Syriac work dated to ca. 380 CE—requires a lengthy period of testing for a wide range of ritual practitioners (*Apostolic Constitutions*, 8.32.11; SC 336: 238). Likewise, the so-called *Canons of Hippolytus*, whose Egyptian author was greatly influenced by the *Apostolic Tradition*, forbids a similar list of practitioners from participating in catechesis and baptism until they cease their behavior—which must be confirmed by three witnesses (*Canon paschalis*, 15). For discussion of these sources, see de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*, 36–37.

98 Text and translation taken from *Pistis Sophia*, ed. C. Schmidt and trans. V. MacDermot (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 30–31 (emphasis in original). For a discussion of this passage, see K. Dosoo, *Rituals of Apparition in the Theban Magical Library* (PhD diss., Macquarie University, 2014), 255.

99 E.g., Council of Ancyra, Canon 24; Basil of Caesarea, Canon 65. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, Canons 7, 8, 72, 83; Gregory of Nyssa, Canon 3.

100 As Dosoo notes, the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ is contrasted in *Pistis Sophia* with the ⲣⲉϥⲕⲁⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ, who makes predictions through calculations (*Rituals of Apparition*, 255).

101 Pseudo-Athanasius, Canon 41. See also Pseudo-Athanasius, Canons 25, 71, and 72. For the Arabic and Coptic texts and English translations of these canons, see *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria*, ed. and trans. W. Riedel and W.E. Crum (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904). On the date, see Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, xiv.

102 Pseudo-Athanasius, Canon 71.

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author imagined *grimoires* like those among the Greek Magical Papyri.[103] A Phrygian canon (ca. IV/V CE), which has been falsely attributed to a single Council of Laodicea, prohibits local clericals from functioning as ritual experts and congregants from using ritual objects.[104] The text reads, "They who are of the priesthood (ἱερατικούς), or of the clergy (κληρικούς), shall not be μάγους, ἐπαοιδούς, μαθηματικούς, or ἀστρολόγους; nor shall they make what are called φυλακτήρια, which are chains for their own souls. And those who wear such (chains), we command to be cast out of the Church."[105] This text goes beyond the canon of Pseudo-Athanasius in calling for the (permanent?) excommunication of users of φυλακτήρια—suspended ritual objects typically associated in the material record with the positive functions of healing and protection from demons.[106]

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103 See below, Dieleman, Chapter 13 and Van der Vliet, Chapter 14, and further on authorship such manuals: R.K. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire," in *ANRW*, II. 18.5, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 3333–79; J. Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 185–284; D. Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician,'" in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 115–35.

104 On this collection of Phrygian canons, probably assembled in the late-fourth or early-fifth century CE, see P.-P. Joannou, *Discipline génerale antique* (*IV^e–IX^e s.*), vol. 1, *Les canons des synodes particuliers* (Vatican: Tipografia Italo-Orientale 'S. Nilo', 1962) 127–28; de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*, 39.

105 Canon 36. The above translation follows the general structure of H.R. Percival (in *npnf* 2–14); however, I have removed the glosses used to translate μάγους, ἐπαοιδούς, and the like. Cf. Canon 36 of the seventh-century CE Council of Trullo; John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale*, 146. The importance placed in this canon—and in the canon of Pseudo-Athanasius—on ritual experts devoted to acquiring knowledge (e.g., ρεγκλογιωγ, μαθηματικός, and ἀστρολόγος) might reflect growing concerns within Christian discourse that diviners undermined a single Christocentric cosmos: e.g., P. Athanassiadi, Philosophers and Oracles: Shifts of Authority in Late Paganism, *Byzantion* 62 (1992): 45–62; N. Denzey Lewis, "A New Star on the Horizon: Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. S. Noegel, J. Walker, and B. Wheeler (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 207–22. Indeed, late antiquity witnessed the proliferation of new forms of divination, including those associated with Christian characters and sites: David Frankfurter, "Voices, Books, and Dreams: The Diversification of Divination Media in Late Antique Egypt," in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, RGRW 155, ed. S.I. Johnston and P.T. Struck (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 233–55. That the 'Council of Laodicea' implies that clergy were functioning as diviners might be particularly significant; the threat to the Christian cosmology would indeed increase if the very local representatives of ecclesiastical discourse promoted contrasting cosmological systems with that of imperially sponsored Christianity.

106 The term φυλακτήριον is used as a native term on several amulets for healing and protection (e.g., P. Haun. III 51; P. Heid. inv. G 1386; P. Köln inv. 851).

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These canons give weight to the historical proposition that many of the extant amulets and other applied ritual objects from late antiquity were made by ecclesiastical functionaries.[107] But they also offer precious information about late antique taxonomies of ritual practice. Like the *Didache*, these canons clearly connect the term μάγος to other categories of illicit ritual practitioners. Yet these lists are *exclusively* devoted to ritual practices and specialists and, consequently, the rituals are not juxtaposed with abstract or non-ritual 'moral' qualities in any observable way. Illicit rituals and experts emerge from these canons as a discrete area of concern that necessitates specific punishments and disciplinary actions (e.g., penance for three years and even excommunication).[108] In short, we can see in these canons nascent understandings of our concept 'ritual,' especially in its negative sense. Indeed, all of the categories of ritual specialization are gathered in these canons as if under a specific rubric, which we might imagine to be 'illicit specialists and their rituals.'[109]

3.2.5 Catalogues of Illegitimate Rituals and Imperial Law

These canons were not alone in their isolation of ritual behavior. Late antique legal experts likewise compiled laws specifically devoted to forbidden rituals and offenders of those rituals. James Rives has shown that Roman imperial legislation increasingly emphasized deviant ritual practices, including but not limited to those that caused harm.[110] It is not surprising, therefore, that

107 Caesarius, *Sermo*, 50; cf. *Vita S. Eligii Episcopi Noviomensis*. For discussion, see e.g., Stander, "Amulets," 61. For other kinds of ritual experts, see Athanasius, *De amuletis*; Athanasius, *Syntagma ad Monachos*, 2 (Cod. Vossianus gr. in fol. N. 46). Cf. Chrysostom, *De Chananaea*. For scholarly discussion, see e.g., D. Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians,'" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, RGRW 141, ed. P.A. Mirecki and M.W. Meyer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 159–78.

108 That ritual expertise constituted an independent question in its original context—not to mention in its subsequent reception—holds true whether the extant wording of this canon reflects the actual language of the Phrygian canonical tradition or merely a subsequent summary (*résumé*) of that tradition (cf. Joannou, *Discipline*, 128).

109 The received title of the 'Laodicean' canon (περὶ τῶν ἐπῳδαῖς ἢ φυλακτηρίοις χρωμένων [Latin: *de his qui incantatoribus et philacteriis, id est ligaturis, utuntur*]) almost certainly represents a subsequent traditional layer to the extant wording of the canon itself; the sole focus on usage in the title stands in marked contrast to the language of the canon, which places considerable emphasis on the clericals who were functioning as ritual experts (cf. Joannou, *Discipline*, 128).

110 Rives, "Magic in Roman Law." In this vein, it is likely that the Christian emperors were not simply following Christian theological writings, but were also following legal precedent (see I. Sandwell, "Outlawing 'Magic' or Outlawing 'Religion'? Libanius and the Theodosian

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the mid-fourth century CE witnessed a surprising number of accusations and trials of individuals on charges of illicit ritual activity.[111] Following this legal precedent, the fifth-century CE *Theodosian Code* (*CTh*) included prohibitions against deviant ritual activities and actors (often denoted *malefici*). The section on *malefici* (*De maleficis et mathematicis et ceteris similibus* [*CTh* 9.16]) occurs within the *Theodosian Code* as part of legislation against criminal activity.[112] Of particular significance for our present concerns are the kinds of ritual practices included and excluded within this rubric, thus providing insight into the operative taxonomies of illicit ritual practices among its fifth-century CE compilers. In addition to *malefici* (and cognates),[113] *mathematici*,[114] *magi* (and cognates),[115] we find *haruspices*,[116] those who invoke *daemones*,[117] *harioli*,[118] and *augures* (and cognates).[119] Another law outside of section 9.16 forbids several ritual practices (e.g., sacrificing in public or private shrines, burning incense, and worshipping images) that would have simply reflected traditional

Code as Evidence for Legislation against 'Pagan' Practices," in *The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Essays in Explanation*, ed. W.V. Harris (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 87–123 at 88).

111 P. Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in *Witchcraft, Confessions and Accusations*, ed. M. Douglas (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 17–45; A. Lotz, *Der Magiekonflikt in der Spätantike* (Bonn: Habelt, 2005); Dickie, *Magic*, 251–57; Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural*, 63–80. Ammianus Marcellinus lists several ritual practices that would lead to capital punishment (*Res Gestae*, 19.12.14).

112 The Latin title for this section is typically translated along the lines of 'Concerning Magicians, Astrologers, and the like.' As J. Matthews has argued, one must pay close attention to how the compilers put together the *CTh* (J. F. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000], 12). Isabella Sandwell thus reasonably concludes that the placement of *malefici* within this part of the *CTh* suggests that the compilers were returning to an earlier classificatory scheme in which 'magic' was associated with criminal activity, especially murder (Sandwell, "Outlawing 'Magic,'" 95).

113 *CTh*. 9.16.3 (=brev.9.13.1), 317/19; 9.16.4 (=brev.9.13.2); 9.16.6, 358; 9.16.9, 371; 9.16.10, 371; 9.16.11, 389. Unless otherwise stated, the dates for these laws have been taken from O.F. Robinson, *Penal Practice and Penal Policy in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 2007), 130–57.

114 *CTh*. 9.16.4 (=brev. 9.13.2), 357; 9.16.6, 358; 9.16.8, 370/73; 9.16.12, 409.

115 *CTh.* 9.16.4 (=brev. 9.13.2), 357; 9.16.6, 358; 9.16.6, 358. *Magicae artes*: 9.16.3 (=brev. 9.13.1), 318 (cf. Lotz, *Der Magiekonflikt*, 138 n. 439); 9.16.5, 357.

116 *CTh*. 9.16.1, 319; 9.16.4, 357; 9.16.6, 358.

117 *CTh*. 9.16.3, 318; 9.16.4, 357; 9.16.7 (=brev. 9.13.3), 364.

118 *CTh*. 9.16.4, 357; 9.16.6, 358.

119 *CTh*. 9.16.6, 358; 9.16.4, 357; 9.16.4, 357.

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Roman religion.[120] The emphasis in imperial law on predictive and prophetic rites and experts probably reflects growing concerns about political sedition associated with unsanctioned rituals of arcane knowledge.[121] Accordingly, some laws were particularly concerned with private and clandestine rituals, especially those done at night.[122] Such activities were among those warranting capital punishment (*capite puniatur*).[123]

Even though many of the laws in the *CTh* date back to earlier periods of the empire, it is worth stressing again that the compilation, structure, and ordering of the *CTh* was a product of the early fifth century CE. It is interesting, therefore, that there is a key difference between the taxonomy promoted in the *CTh* and that in the roughly contemporaneous 'Laodicean' canon. Despite the general emphasis on ritual deviance—and a law of Constantius, which refers to *magi* as 'enemies of the human race' (*humani generis inimici*)[124]—the *CTh* allows for rites that benefit people in areas, such as health and harvest.[125] By contrast, the canon condemns the making and use of φυλακτήρια, typically associated with healing and protection from demons, even to the point of excommunication. The differences between these two texts might have been occasioned in part from the respective interests of emperors and ecclesiastical leaders—a distinction also reflected in late antique battles between church and state over the proper treatment of the Jews.[126] Yet, as we will see in the next section, not all differences of opinion can be attributed to the emperor–ecclesiarch divide; church leaders disagreed among themselves about the boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate ritual activity, including the manufacturing and use of φυλακτήρια.

120 *CTh*. 16.10.12. Sandwell, "Outlawing 'Magic,'" 97. Cf. 9.16.6, 358. On the tendency among Christian emperors beginning in the fourth century CE to apply the label *superstitio* to local customs or 'paganism,' see Salzman, *Superstitio* in the *Codex Theodosianus*.

121 E.g., Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural*, 74; Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*; M.T. Fögen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993), 160–62.

122 *CTh*. 9.16.7, 364. On the significance of secrecy and nocturnal rites on the prosecution of Apuleius, see H.G. Kippenberg, "Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals Could be Illegal," in *Envisioning Magic*, 137–63 at 151–52.

123 *CTh*. 9.16.7, 364; cf. 9.16.4, 357.

124 *CTh*. 9.16.6, 358.

125 *CTh.* 9.16.3, 318.

126 J.E. Sanzo and R. Boustan, "Jewish Culture and Society in a Christianizing Empire," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. M. Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 358–75.

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3.2.6 Lists and Illicit Rituals: Conclusions

Attention to the occurrences of μαγεία, φαρμακεία, and other categories of ritual practice on lists and related genres has allowed us to observe a development in the early Christian depictions—and conceptions—of (illicit) ritual. In the earliest strata of the extant evidence, followers of Jesus—like other Jews—framed illicit ritual practices, if at all, under general rubrics (e.g., 'the works of the flesh') and, accordingly, lumped them together with more abstract qualities and with other activities we would not identify with magic or illicit ritual (e.g., murder and fornication). In the New Testament, it is the φαρμακεία word group (and allusions to the 'evil eye')—not μαγεία—that dominates these early lists of inappropriate behaviors or qualities. The *Didache* represents the first extant text of the burgeoning Jesus movement (1) to include μαγεία in a list of sins, (2) to link explicitly μαγεία and φαρμακεία as related (ritual) practices, and (3) to devote a short section to illicit ritual actors. Yet, even in the *Didache*, these illicit practices and actors occur within larger textual units not limited to rituals. As time passed, however, inappropriate ritual and its experts developed into a category of its own on lists. This process culminated in late antiquity with ecclesiastical canons devoted exclusively to deviant ritual actors and their practices and with a clearly demarcated section of imperial law explicitly organized around illicit ritual activities. In the final part of this chapter, we will detail how the developments in illegitimate ritual, evident in Christian narratives and lists, played out in various domains of Christian life and discourse.

4 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Discursive Contexts

Depictions of and references to μαγεία, φαρμακεία, and γοητεία *inter alia* figured into diverse literary and social contexts throughout late antiquity. Discussions of ritual were inextricably linked to conflicts, assimilations, and accommodations among and between the emergent Christian movements and their Mediterranean contexts. Many early Christian authors mapped onto their immediate environments (fictive) temptations and threats. Illegitimate rituals—especially those associated with terms, such as μαγεία and φαρμακεία—constituted one such menacing domain. This section sketches some of the most important ways discourses of illegitimate ritual figured into early Christian social and ritual life. As we will see, early Christian writers used slanderous tropes, such as demonic association and foolishness, to describe illegitimate rituals and their actors. At the same time, however, illegitimate rituals themselves—with those negative connotations attached—often

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functioned as lenses through which various others could be seen, classified, and maligned.

4.1 *Illegitimate Ritual, Slander, and Demons*

We have already seen how the *Didache* and *Ep. Barn.* rejected μαγεία and φαρμακεία. It is possible that Ignatius of Antioch, perhaps writing in the second century CE, also denounced the ritual dimensions of μαγεία.[127] He notes that the incarnation of Christ vanquished (ἐλύετο) all μαγεία and every 'δεσμὸς … κακίας' (literally 'bondage of evil').[128] The close proximity of μαγεία to the phrase δεσμὸς … κακίας might suggest that the latter phrase referred to binding rituals and related objects, which were common throughout the ancient Mediterranean world.[129] In either case, a triumphal posture over illegitimate ritual was not the only way such vocabulary penetrated early Christian texts.

Early followers of Jesus also deployed language associated with ritual practice in order to frame certain activities and actors as inappropriate. The *Epistle to Diognetus*, for instance, calls the speculations of philosophers on the nature of God πλάνη τῶν γοήτων.[130] The text places this philosophical deception in stark opposition to the revelation of God through faith (διὰ πίστεως).[131] The pseudepigraphical epistle 2 Timothy gestures toward ancient ritual antagonists (2 Tim. 3:8) as part of its condemnation of behaviors (e.g., greed, disobedience, lacking self-control) associated with troublemakers (2 Tim. 3:1–8). The text refers to Jannes and Jambres—who correspond to the wizards in Pharaoh's court opposing Moses (cf. Ex. 7:11, 22)—in order to provide a historical analogue

127 On the dating of the Ignatian letters, see e.g., W. Schmithals, "Zu Ignatius von Antiochien" *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 13 (2009): 181–203.

128 Ignatius, *Ephesians*, 19.3. Cf. Ignatius, *Polycarp*, 5.1. The literal translation 'bondage of evil' comes from B. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1:239.

129 The δεσμ– stem was often connected to binding rituals. For this reason, Thee translates the phrase as 'spell' (*Julius Africanus*, 317–18). On binding spells and other imprecatory objects, see J.G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

130 *Epistle to Diognetus*, 8.4. Passing references to such vocabulary can be found in other texts of the 'Apostolic Fathers.' For instance, both Ignatius (*Trallians*, 6.2) and the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (17.7 [Vis. 3.9.7]) discuss the use of φάρμακα, though it is unclear the extent to which they highlight ritual. The *Shepherd of Hermas* agrees with the Acts of the Apostles in linking mantic specialists with demonic activity. The author notes that the devil fills the spirit of the mantic practitioner (cf. μαντεύομαι), providing that specialist with his ritual abilities (*Shep. Herm.* 43 [Man. 11.4, 17]).

131 *Epistle to Diognetus*, 8.5–6.

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for this contemporary group of men who captivate (cf. the verb αἰχμαλωτίζω) 'weak women' (γυναικάρια).[132] 2 Timothy also refers to γόητες (2 Tim. 3:13), pairing these actors with other 'evil men' (πονηροὶ ἄνθρωποι) who deceive (cf. the verb πλανάω).[133] These writers did not emphasize ritual activity *per se*, but aligned individuals/behaviors they deemed inappropriate with (fraudulent) ritual performers and language of deception.

Often the perceived threats associated with illicit rituals extended beyond the activities of humans. As we have seen, the New Testament writings only explicitly connected demons with mantic activity (μαντεύομαι; Acts 16:16–24). Yet, evil spirits quickly became one of the principle discursive registers through which Christians understood and described various Jewish and heathen rituals and their practitioners.[134] This demonic discourse no doubt worked in dialogue with the growing late antique belief that cities were teeming with malicious spirits.[135] Already in his *First Apology*—which dates to approximately the mid-second century CE—Justin Martyr identifies 'μαγικῶν στροφῶν' as a practice of δαίμονες.[136] Tertullian of Carthage linked illegitimate ritual practice with evil otherworldly agents through a fictive genealogy, tracing the ritual use of material substances—along with *incantationes*—back to the *nephilim*.[137] This theme remained prominent throughout post-New Testament Christian antiq-

132 Although the Exodus narrative remains silent on the identities of the 'sorcerers' and 'magicians' who opposed Moses (MT: *mekhashfim* and *hartumim*; LXX: φαρμακούς and ἐπαοιδοί), at least the name Jannes was already known to the author of the Damascus Document (1QS III.20), Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, 30.2.11), Numenius of Apamea (*On the Good* 3 F9), and Apuleius (*Apologia*, 90). With the exception of the Damascus Document, each of the other authors refers to them or to their deeds with the μαγ-/*mag*-word group. On the origin and reception history of the characters Jannes and Jambres, see A. Pietersma, *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians: P. Chester Beatty XVI* (*with New Editions of Papyrus Vindobonensis Greek inv. 29456 + 29828 verso and British Library Cotton Tiberius B. v f. 87*), RGRW 119 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 3–71.

133 On the meaning of γόητος and its cognates, see Graf, *Magic*, 24–28.

134 V. Flint, "The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, 277–348. On the demonization of ritual more generally, see J.Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," in *ANRW* II.16.1, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978), 254–394.

135 D. Kalleres, *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 4–6.

136 Justin Martyr, *1 Apologia*, 14:1–3; 26.2, 4; 56.1; *2 Apologia*, 5. Aristides connects the Greek gods with φαρμακεία/φάρμακοι (*Apologia*, 8.3; 13.7) and even refers to Hermes as a μάγος (*Apologia*, 10.3).

137 Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum*, 1.2.1, 2.10.2–3. Cf. Tertullian, *De anima*, 57.1; Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 1; Justin Martyr, *2 Apologia*, 5[4].2–4; *Recognitions* 1.30.2–3; 4.27; 9.25; Cassian, *Conf.* 8.21. On the origin of illicit practices and knowledge in the teachings of fallen angels see above, Harari, Chapter 8.

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uity. In addition to relatively early writers, such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, Arnobius of Sicca—writing at the cusp of the Constantinian period—drew a connection between demons and illicit ritual.[138] Likewise, post-Constantinian theologians associated demons with rituals they deemed inappropriate, often simultaneously linking such practices with categories of nefarious human Others (see below). Augustine of Hippo, for instance, attacks the theurgists' distinction between *goetia* and *theurgia* by claiming that *magia, goetia,* and *theurgia* all equally fall under the category '*ritibus fallacibus daemonum*' ('fallacious rites of demons').[139]

4.2 *Illegitimate Ritual and the Clarification of Ritual and Social Ambiguity*

Language of inappropriate ritual practice—whether expressly connected with demons—also helped clarify and shape the borders of social and ritual domains. Early Christian authors often pointed to μαγεία and the like to create and maintain their preferred boundaries between Christians and Others, especially when those boundaries were drawn in unsanctioned ways in social reality.[140] For instance, Justin Martyr made a clear contrast between Christian exorcists, who successfully cast out demons 'by the name of Jesus Christ,' and non-Christian ritual experts, who use inappropriate ritual techniques.[141] Jewish exorcists represent for Justin a key subcategory of non-Christian ritual experts who—like their gentile counterparts—use 'fumigations and binding adjurations' (θυμιάμασι καὶ καταδέσμοις).[142] Justin's rhetoric, therefore, was not simply about inappropriate ritual activity; the discourse of illicit ritual was

138 Arnobius of Sicca, *Adversus nationes*, 1.43.

139 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 10.9. Cf. *De civitate Dei*, 9.1; 8.18,19; *De doctrina*, 2.20.30; *Sermo*, 198. On the demonic associations with divinatory rituals, see Augustine, *De divinitate daemonum*, 3.7; 8.22; cf. Augustine, *De divinitate daemonum*, 5.9. On Augustine and 'magic' more generally, see R.A. Markus, "Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 40 (1994): 375–88; F. Graf, "Augustine and Magic," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic*, 87–104. See also Eusebius of Caesarea, *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, 13.4.

140 See, for instance, Elaine Pagels' three-part series on the social history of Satan: E. Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, the 'Intimate Enemy': A Preliminary Sketch," *HTR* 84 (1991): 105–28; Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, Part II: Satan in the New Testament Gospels," *JAAR* 62 (1994) 187–215; "The Social History of Satan, Part Three: John of Patmos and Ignatius of Antioch: Contrasting Visions of 'God's People,'" *HTR* 99 (2006): 487–505.

141 See especially Justin Martyr, *2 Apologia*, 6.6. See also Justin Martyr *Dialogus*, 30.3; 76.6; *Dialogus*, 85.2; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.67; 2.33; 3.24, 28. For discussion of Justin Martyr's approach to inappropriate vs. appropriate exorcistic activity, see Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1546.

142 Justin Martyr, *Dialogus*, 85.3.

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also one of his strategies for distinguishing Christians from Others, especially Jews.[143] Heresiologists, such as Irenaeus, claimed that all heresies (*haereses*) could be traced back to Simon Magus (*magus*).[144] It is not surprising that Irenaeus also accuses many of these alleged false teachers of being skilled in rituals and deceptions related to *magia* (e.g., *magicae imposturae*).[145] While Irenaeus condemned such activity, he was not primarily interested in illicit rituals.[146] Instead, this word group facilitated his larger plan of demarcating his preferred boundaries between Christian insiders and heretical outsiders.[147]

In post-Constantinian Christian discourse, rituals for healing and protection continued to function as a key discursive site for negotiating the boundaries of Christianity.[148] Augustine showcased ritual artifacts, such as *ligaturae* (suspended objects with incantations) and a 'ring' (*anulus*) with

143 For Justin's broader anti-Jewish invective, see T. Rajak, "Talking at Trypho: Christian Apologetic as Anti-Judaism in Justin's 'Dialogue with Trypho the Jew,'" in *The Jewish Debate with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, ed. T. Rajak (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), 511–33; D. Rokeah, *Justin Martyr and the Jews* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002).

144 Esp. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, 1.23; Cf. Justin Martyr, *1 Apologia,* 26.2, 4; 56.1; *Didascalia* 6.7–9.

145 Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, 1.13.1; 1.23.1, 4, 5; 1.24.5; 1.25.3.

146 The illicit rituals that fall under the category *magia* for Irenaeus include adjurations and incantations (*Adv. haer.*, 1.23.4), love charms (*Adv. haer.*, 1.13.5; 1.23.4; 1.25.3), and the use of *daimōn*-assistants and dream senders (*Adv. haer.*, 1.13.3; 1.23.4; 1.25.3).

147 See also e.g., Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies* (a.k.a. *Elenchos*), IV 28–42; VI 7,1; VI 39,1; IX 14,2; IX 16, 1; X 29,3. James A. Kelhoffer has argued that the parallels between the *Refutation* and the rituals proscribed in the so-called Greek Magical Papyri (*PGM*) suggest that the writer used for his account source material from handbooks—though not necessarily the *PGM* in particular ('Hippolytus' and Magic: An Examination of *Elenchos* IV 28–42 and Related Passages in Light of the Papyri Graecae Magicae, *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 11 (2008): 517–48). Imperial law occasionally drew a connection between *maleficium* and heresy (cf. *CTh.* 16.5.34). For discussion, see M.V. Escribano Paño, "Heretical Texts and *maleficium* in the *Codex Thedosianus* (*CTh.* 16.5.34)," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 105–38.

148 It might be tempting simply to associate the frequent Christian participation in indigenous practices with their general lack of respect for or knowledge of the boundaries between Christianity and local customs. But many leaders (e.g., Augustine and Chrysostom) often took for granted that the believers who visited local specialists or participated in local ritual practices otherwise held to clear-cut distinctions between Christians and non-Christians (Augustine, *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*, 7.6.5; Chrysostom, *Adversus iudaeos*, 8.5.4.). The disjuncture between congregants and their leaders over local ritual practices, therefore, was not always centered on religious/ethnic boundaries *per se*, but rather, at least on occasion, revolved around the *particular configuration* of the boundaries between Christianity and local customs. On this point, see J.E. Sanzo, "Magic and Communal Boundaries: The Problems with Amulets in Chrysostom, *Adv. iud.* 8, and Augustine, *In Io. tra.* 7," *Henoch* 39.2 (2017): 227–46. It should be noted that concerns about religious/ethnic boundaries are also evident in the extant amuletic record itself (see

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healing powers, as heathen[149] and Jewish[150] foils to legitimate *Christian* objects and actors (e.g., gospel manuscripts and Christian martyrs). John Chrysostom likewise linked the production and use of ἐπῳδαί, περιάμματα, and the like with the Jews in order to erect his preferred bulwark between Christian and Jewish ideologies and social spaces.[151] Both Augustine and Chrysostom contrast those who use ritual objects for healing with martyrs, who remained faithful to the end despite their physical suffering.[152]

Illicit rites also functioned as a point of orientation for defining proper Christian ritual practice. Origen of Alexandria (185–254 CE) rejected Celsus' alleged claim that Christian clergy used ritual 'barbarous books that contain the names of daimones and wonders' (βιβλία βάρβαρα, δαιμόνων ὀνόματα ἔχοντα καὶ τερατείας).[153] Instead, he highlights that believers eschew ritual 'incantations' (κατακηλήσεσιν) and successfully cast out demons through proclamations of Jesus' name and via 'the recitation of narratives about him' (τῆς ἀπαγγελίας τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν ἱστοριῶν).[154] Illicit objects and rituals could also function as a metaphor for sanctioned Christian symbols and rituals. For instance, John Chrysostom mandated that catechumen renounce περίαπτα and ἐπῳδαί, illicit ritual objects and formulae respectively.[155] This renunciation, however, is immediately followed by Chrysostom's proclamation that the cross constitutes a 'marvelous περίαπτον and a great ἐπῳδήν,' and then by his blessing for the

R. Boustan and J.E. Sanzo, "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity," *HTR* 110 (2017): 217–40, esp. 233–38).

149 *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*, 7:12.

150 *De civitate dei* 22.8.

151 E.g., John Chrysostom, *Adversus iudaeos*, 8.5.6; cf. 8.6.10; Chrysostom also links illicit ritual to other groups, such as the Egyptians (Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matthaeum*, 8).

152 E.g., Augustine, *Sermo*, 287.7; *Sermo*, 318.3; John Chrysostom, *Adversus iudaeos*, 8.7.3, 13; 8.8.4. Cf. Ambrose, *Ep.* 61. For comment on Chrysostom's deployment of this strategy, see e.g., Trzcionka, *Magic*, 122–23.

153 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 6.40; cf. *Contra Celsum*, 6.39. Celsus also apparently claimed that Jesus performed his miracles through γοητεία (e.g., Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.6; 2.49, 55). According to Matthew Dickie, Celsus was responding to traveling 'magicians' (*Magic*, 236–43). On the socio-political dimensions of Celsus' accusations of magic against Christians, see M. Choi, "Christianity, Magic, and Difference: Name-Calling and Resistance between the Lines in Contra Celsus," *Semeia* 79 (1997): 75–92.

154 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.6 (cf. *Contra Celsum*, 3.24; 8.61). For the relationship between Origen's words here and late antique amulets, see Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 37–38.

155 John Chrysostom, *Catechesis*, 2.6 (trans. mine). For the text, see *Varia Graeca Sacra*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1975), 172. Cf. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, 7.11; Martin of Braga, *Reforming the Rustics*, 16.

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'soul who recites the name of Jesus who was crucified' (ψυχὴ ἡ λέγουσα τὸ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σταυρωθέντος).

Ecclesiastical writers also drew clear lines between licit and illicit healing practices and professionals. Augustine, for instance, contrasted *superstitiosum* and *magicae artes* (e.g., *ligaturae* and *praecantationes*) with the approved activities of doctors.[156] Interestingly, however, ancient medical specialists themselves drew the lines between approved and unapproved healing practices differently than ecclesiastical leaders such as Augustine. Christopher Faraone has demonstrated that the purviews and interests of doctors and local ritual specialists overlapped considerably in late antiquity.[157] In this vein, the sixth-century CE physician Alexander of Tralles prescribed a remedy for colic that is virtually indistinguishable from contemporary φυλακτήρια.[158] Even Galen occasionally acknowledged the efficacy of ritual objects, despite his generally negative presentation of them.[159]

The paradigms of licit and illicit healing practices that Augustine and his ilk promoted also did not always match those of their congregations. The complaints of Christian participation in local customs of healing and protection, which pepper ecclesiastical texts from various regions of the ancient Mediterranean world, tacitly attest to a disjuncture between church leaders and their congregants over this topic.[160] Augustine himself lamented the Christian use of various objects and materials for healing, including *inaures* ('earrings'),[161] *struthionum ossa* ('ostrich bones'),[162] and herbs.[163] In Antioch, Chrysostom chastised as foolish the practice of tying prophylactic objects to

156 Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.20.30. In fact, Augustine claims that doctors likewise condemned such practices (*medicorum quoque disciplina condemnat*). Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.29.45; *De civitate dei* 8.19; 8.22; 10.9.

157 C.A. Faraone, "Magic and Medicine in the Roman Imperial Period: Two Case Studies," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. G. Bohak, Y. Harari, and S. Shaked (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 135–57.

158 *Therapeutics*, 8.2 (on colic).

159 *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus*, 6.10. Cf. also the writings of Julius Africanus and related texts (e.g., *Cesti*, F12,17; F77). For discussion, see Thee, *Julius Africanus*, 193–309; M. Wallraff, "Magie und Religion in den Kestoi des Julius Africanus," in *Die Kestoi des Julius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung*, ed. M. Wallraff and L. Mecella (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 39–52.

160 On the local customs of Gaul during late antiquity, see W.E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 209–26.

161 Augustine, *Ep*. 245.2; Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.20.30.

162 Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.20.30.

163 Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.29.45; cf. Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica*, 3.6.

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newborn babies.[164] Shenoute of Atripe condemns people for visiting monks who prescribed remedies, such as snakes' heads (ϩⲉⲛⲁⲡⲉ ⲛϩⲟⲩ), crocodiles' teeth (ϩⲉⲛⲛⲁϫⲉ ⲛⲙⲥⲁϩ), or fox claws (ϩⲉⲛⲓⲉⲓⲃ ⲛⲃⲁϣⲟⲣ).[165] The sixth-century CE Portuguese bishop Martin of Braga connects local practices, such as lighting candles beside rocks and trees and throwing bread into a fountain, with *divinationes* and *maleficia* and viewed such customs as tantamount to devil worship (*cultura diaboli*).[166]

But bishops and other ecclesiastical leaders not only had to grapple with the participation of Christians in local rites and customs. Developments in Christian material culture also confronted ecclesiastical leadership with new curative and apotropaic rituals, which mapped Christian elements onto indigenous precedents and were typically performed in contexts outside or at the margins of episcopal control. Indeed, the extant material record testifies to a proliferation of healing and protective objects,[167] *eulogiai* (e.g., clay tokens and flasks containing oil),[168] and other materials invoking biblical heroes or associated with the cults of martyrs and saints.[169] This material record is

164 Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam i ad Corinthios*, 12. Cf. Tertullian, *De anima*, 39. On the use of illicit rituals on behalf of children, see e.g., Chysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ad Colossenses*, 8; Gregory Nazianzus, *In sanctum baptisma*, 36.381; Basil, *Homiliae in Psalmum*, 45. The frequent use of amulets and the like for children was no doubt based on high infant mortality rates in antiquity (Stander, "Amulets," 60; cf. R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], 182).

165 Shenoute, Acephalous work A14§§ 255–59, ed. T. Orlandi, *Shenute: Contra Origenistas* (Rome: CIM, 1985), 18–20). For discussion, see D. Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 60–69. Cf. Ps-Athanasius, *Homily on Virginity* 92 and 95. On the textual problems with Shenoute, Acephalous work A14, see S. Emmel, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus*, 2 vols. (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 2: 692–93. On the relationship between monks and 'magic,' see Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise," 167–70; D. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 226–39.

166 Martin of Braga, *Reforming the Rustics*, 16. Cf. *CTh* 16.10.12. For discussion, see Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," 264–65.

167 See esp. T.S. de Bruyn, "Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca, and Tablets Written with Biblical Texts in Greek and Used as Amulets: A Preliminary List," in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. T.J. Kraus and T. Nicklas (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 145–89; Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*; B.C. Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity* (London: T&T Clark, 2016).

168 E.g., J.C. Skedros, "Shrines, Festivals, and the 'Undistinguished Mob,'" in *Byzantine Christianity*, ed. D. Krueger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 81–102 at 91–94.

169 E.g., P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981); D. Frankfurter, "Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt," *JECS* 11 (2003) 339–85; P.C. Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2009).

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corroborated by literary sources, which likewise testify to the apotropaic, curative, and prophetic use of miniature biblical artifacts,[170] crosses,[171] and even the Eucharistic host.[172] How ought Christian leaders approach such ambiguous artifacts and rituals? Should they be promoted, tolerated, or condemned? Not surprisingly, church officials, operating at different times and in different regions of the empire, came to different conclusions about such ambiguous rituals.

While ritual objects inscribed solely with unusual marks or names of traditional deities could be condemned as non-Christian with relative ease,[173] rituals and objects associated with the Bible or saints naturally posed greater taxonomic difficulty for ecclesiastical leadership. The diverse practices and gestures associated with saints' shrines (e.g., incubations, uses of oils, and dancing[174]), for instance, elicited different ecclesiastical responses, including promotion,[175] scorn,[176] and condemnation.[177] The curative and apotropaic use of biblical artifacts likewise posed challenges for church leaders. We have already witnessed Origen's promotion of the *recitation* (ἀπαγγελία) of Jesus' name and stories about him in contrast to invocations to demons. Church leaders writing in subsequent periods, however, needed to focus their attention on biblical *objects*, which at times could resemble devices associated with disapproved rituals. For instance, Augustine went to great lengths to draw a hard-and-fast distinction

170 E.g., Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, 8.1–3; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 22. For the use of sacred books for various ritual purposes, see C. Rapp, "Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes: Aspects of Scriptural Holiness in Late Antiquity," in *The Early Christian Book*, ed. W.E. Klingshirn and L. Safran (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 194–224.

171 E.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Sanctae Macrinae*.

172 E.g., Ambrose, *De excessu fratris sui Satyri* 43; Gregory of Nazianzus, *On the Death of His Father*. For discussion, see V. Limberis, "The Cult of the Martyrs and the Cappadocian Fathers," in *Byzantine Christianity*, 50–54.

173 On the use of marks, see Basil, *Hom. In Psalm.* 45; Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.20.30; Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo*, 204. It is likely that these marks reflect the use of *charaktēres*, which proliferated in *grimoires* and applied artifacts during late antiquity and beyond. For a recent analysis of this practice, see R. Gordon, "*Charaktēres* between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-Invention," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'antiquité à la Renaissance*, ed. V. Dasen and J.-M. Spieser (Florence: Sismel, 2014) 253–300, and below, Frankfurter, Chapter 23. Names of traditional deities: see Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ad Colossenses* 8, who describes the amuletic use of rivers' names.

174 See n. 176 below.

175 E.g., Theodoret, *Therapeutike* 8.68–70; Gregory of Tours, *Miracles of St. Martin* 4.36; Sophronius, *The Miracles of Ss. Cyril and John* 35 and 55.

176 E.g., Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.14.

177 E.g., Athanasius, *Festal Letter*, 42; cf. *CTh.*, 16.10.10. For discussion of the various approaches to shrines, see Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," 263.

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between the inappropriate use of *ligaturae*—including those that 'mix' (*miscere*) Jesus' name into their incantations—and the appropriate use of biblical artifacts for healing.[178] Chrysostom somewhat begrudgingly approved of the suspension of biblical artifacts on bedposts for healing—though he frames it as an inferior ritual practice to the giving of alms.[179] Caesarius of Arles, however, disapproved of any such objects; for him, Christians could turn instead to what he regarded as proper rituals for protection and healing, such as the celebration of the Eucharist and the unction for the sick.[180]

The production and use of φυλακτήρια constituted another ambiguous ritual practice that, accordingly, elicited different opinions within ecclesiastical discourse.[181] We have already seen how the so-called 'Laodicean' canon deemed φυλακτήρια 'chains of the soul' and mandated excommunication for those who made and used them. Yet not all Christians took such a hardline stance against φυλακτήρια. Much of the discussion around φυλακτήρια took place in response to Matthew 23:5 ("But they [Pharisees and scribes] do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries [φυλακτήρια] and lengthen the tassels of their garments"), the only New Testament passage in which this term is found.[182] Early Christian commentators stressed different aspects of this passage. Some commentators simply highlighted the evils of public spectacle.[183] Yet others emphasized the ritual dimensions of φυλακτήρια. St. Jerome, for instance, drew a connection between the lack of knowledge of the Pharisees, who believed that these objects (*phylacteria*) could protect them, and 'superstitious women' (*superstitiosae mulierculae*) who possessed 'little Gospels' (*parvulis evangeliis*).[184] In a slightly less derogatory tone, John

178 *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*, 7. On the likelihood that this passage envisioned small manuscripts with only selections from the gospels, see n. 185 below.

179 John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam I ad Corinthios*, 16.9.7.

180 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo*, 50.1. Cf. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo*, 13.5; Martin of Braga, *Reforming the Rustics*, 16.

181 Church fathers took a more universally negative approach to other terms, such as *ligaturae*, ἐπῳδαί and περιάμματα (e.g., Gregory Nazianzus, *In sanctum baptisma*, 36.381; Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica*, 6.3; Augustine, *Epistula*, 245; *Sermo*, 4.36; *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*, 7; Athanasius, *De amuletis*; Basil, *Homilia in Psalmum* 45; Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses*, 8).

182 Within the context of Matthew, φυλακτήρια referred to the Jewish *tefillin*, tiny capsules that contained passages from the Pentateuch (Ex 13:1–10; 13:11–16; Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21) and that were worn on the forehead or arm. In antiquity, the *tefillin* often served an apotropaic function. For discussion, see Y. Cohn, *Tangled Up in Text: Tefillin in the Ancient World* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008); R.S. Fagen, "Phylacteries," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5 vols. (New York: Yale University Press, 1992), 5: 368–79.

183 E.g., Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 11; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, 25.209.

184 Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 4.23.5.

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Chrysostom also drew a comparison between the use of φυλακτήρια by the Pharisees and the suspension of 'Gospels' (εὐαγγέλια) around the necks of many women.[185] Although these authors—especially Jerome—present the women's uses of objects related to φυλακτήρια in rather unflattering ways, neither of them goes as far as the 'Laodicean' canon in calling for excommunication.[186] The approach of these authors to protective rituals, therefore, demonstrates that the local and occasional concerns of church leaders sometimes required them to adopt a posture toward ritual more closely aligned with imperial law (cf. the *Theodosian Code*) than with ecclesiastical edicts from other regions.

4.2.1 The Discursive Contexts of Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Conclusions

Illegitimate and ambiguous rituals constituted important discursive sites on which the emergent Christian movements imagined, shaped, and defended their social relations and practices. More often than not discussions of illegitimate ritual functioned as a means of discrediting and maligning rivals and adversaries. Jewish, heretical, and local practices were associated or conflated with ritual activities simultaneously deemed inappropriate, demonic, impious, or foolish. An adroit reference or allusion to an illegitimate ritual could, therefore, apply clarity and definition to religious boundaries (non-Christian vs. Christian) and healing practices (e.g., doctors vs. ritual experts), which were often characterized by diverse opinions, ambiguities, and complexities in ancient social existence. As Christianization impacted various dimensions of social life—albeit unevenly within and across institutional, regional,

185 *Homiliae in Matthaeum*, 72. Chrysostom here is almost certainly referring to artifacts with a few Gospel passages and not entire codices. For discussion, see e.g., De Bruyn, "Papyri, Parchments," 160; Stander, "Amulets," 57; Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 161–65.

186 The broader Greco-Roman literary motif, which linked illicit or ambiguous ritual practice with women (e.g., Ovid, *Fasti*, 2.571–83; Lucian of Samosata, *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 4), made an impact on early Christian authors (e.g., Chrysostom, *De statuis ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 9; Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses*, 8; Athanasius, *De amuletis*; Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo*, 52.6). On the social function of this motif within early Christianity, see D.S. Kalleres, "Drunken Hags with Amulets and Prostitutes with Erotic Spells: The *Re*-Feminization of Magic in Late Antique Christian Homilies," in *Daughters of Hecate: Women & Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. K.B. Stratton with D.S. Kalleres (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 219–51. We should not, therefore, assume that women were especially attracted to such ritual activities in social reality (*contra* A.D. Vakaloudi, "ΔΕΙΣΙΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ and the Role of the Apotropaic Magic Amulets in the Early Byzantine Empire," *Byzantion* 70 [2000]: 182–210 at 189). Onomastic analysis of the extant amulets from late antiquity suggest that both men (e.g., P. Oxy. LXV 4469, BGU III 954, and P. Berol. 21911) and women (e.g., P. Oxy. VI 924, P. Oxy. VIII 1151, and PSI inv. 365) used such ritual objects.

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and scribal registers—writers also needed to approach ritual practices with new questions and concerns in mind. Indeed, traditional and local religiosity absorbed Christian symbols, spaces, and actors, thus requiring bishops and other church leaders to make difficult decisions about the appropriate limits of Christian ritual. Should the faithful suspend things around their necks or touch objects for healing? What about objects inscribed with biblical passages? Should believers visit the shrines of saints and martyrs? If so, what are they permitted to do there? It is perhaps not surprising that the extant record reveals that such questions elicited divergent responses among ecclesiastical leaders.

5 Conclusions

This survey of illicit, ambiguous, and exotic rituals in early Christian literature has traversed several temporal periods and spatial terrains. I hope this essay has shown that ancient Christian depictions of rituals and terms that modern scholars have often associated with the term magic cannot be reduced to facile narratives of rejection, persecution, or acceptance. Neither can we trace the growth and development of conceptions of illicit or ambiguous rituals within early Christian literature along a straight linear trajectory of increasing complexity, definition, or condemnation. Indeed, language tied to illegitimate and ambiguous rituals was deployed in myriad ways throughout Christian history.

Despite the diversity and complexity of the extant evidence, however, a few general observations can be made. For instance, certain continuities in the depiction of ritual persisted more or less throughout early Christian literature: e.g., the negative associations with terms, such as φαρμακεία; the considerable overlap between the rites, gestures, and formulae of licit and illicit ritual experts; the alignment of illicit ritual with cultural and religious Others; and the connection of illicit rituals with demons (esp. post-New Testament). At the same time, our analysis of the extant literary record has also revealed important ruptures and developments in ideas about ritual practice over the first centuries of Christianity. Large-scale shifts have especially come into sharper relief by comparing the ends of the temporal spectrum. The narrative descriptions of Simon 'Magus,' for instance, in the canonical Acts of the Apostles, on the one hand, and in the *Actus Ver.*, on the other hand, reflect remarkably different emphases and understandings of illegitimate ritual. The *Actus Ver.* not only placed a much greater emphasis on illicit ritual, but it also deployed a much more robust ritual vocabulary. This expansion of terms and expressions specifically pertaining to negative ritual worked in dialogue with the

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emergence in Christianity—and in imperial legislation—of forbidden ritual as an independent concept. In this vein, the lists buried in Galatians and in the Book of Revelation, which appear to include illegitimate rituals alongside various other sins, are conceptually distant from the discrete lists of deviant ritual actors found in the canons of Pseudo-Athanasius and especially in the so-called 'Laodicea' canon. To be sure, hints of this later conception of illicit ritual already appear in the *Didache*, which groups various kinds of ritual practices and actors together (e.g., μαγεία, φαρμακεία, οἰωνοσκόπος, ἐπαοιδὸς, μαθηματικὸς). What is more, the evolution of (il)legitimate ritual did not take place in an intellectual and cultural vacuum. The development of illicit ritual occurred in conjunction with a host of socio-political factors, including the appropriation of new genres, imperial interests in suppressing potentially seditious ritual activity, and ecclesiastical efforts to reign in local customs. On a more general level, this epistemic development in illegitimate ritual was probably part of the broader movement within the Greco-Roman world toward something like our modern category religion.[187]

We must bear in mind, however, that the intellectual shifts and discourses highlighted in this paper took place among a small, cloistered fraction of early Jesus followers. If we read between the lines of these proscriptive Christian texts (and take into consideration the extant material record), we quickly discover that a sizable number of Christians—if not a majority—found nothing incompatible between following Jesus and visiting local specialists to acquire curative or protective objects or to receive information about the future. To the extent that it was known or understood, the emerging conceptualization of illegitimate ritual for many of these believers would have probably constituted little more than a "highfalutin" abstraction by out-of-touch priests and bishops.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Knut Backhaus and Olivier Dufault for reading earlier drafts of this chapter and for providing invaluable feedback. I am also grateful to Sarah Schwarz and Dayna Kalleres for sharing their research on early Christian views of illicit ritual. Finally, I would like to thank David Frankfurter for his excellent input and editorial guidance. Of course, I am responsible for all problems of content and style.

187 Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 335.

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Suggested Readings

Aune, David, "'Magic' in Early Christianity and Its Ancient Mediterranean Context: A Survey of Some Recent Scholarship," ASE 24 (2007): 229–94.

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CHAPTER 11

Roman and Byzantine Egypt

Jacques van der Vliet

The following chapter is an attempt to chart constructions of deviant or illegitimate ritual practices in textual sources from Roman and Byzantine Egypt. The texts discussed are mainly, though not exclusively Christian in character and for the greater part preserved in Greek and Coptic. After a brief historical introduction and a discussion of the sources and their terminology, various literary representations of illegitimate ritual practices will be discussed in five sections, differentiating between the aims that become apparent in the various textual representations of these practices. The first section (4. *Lethal error*) will discuss sources that use them polemically in order to draw boundaries with competing 'others'. The second section (5. *Sinners and sanctions*) deals with authors who condemn undesirable practices within their own in-group. In a third section (6. *Death and mishap*), texts will be discussed that articulate fear of these practices and may therefore give an inkling of actual social realities. The fourth section (7. *Scholars and mythographers*) turns to some contemporaneous scholarly appreciations of the targeted phenomena and their efficacy, while the last (8. *Saints and frauds*) deals with the rhetoric construction of the figure of the counter-ritualist, the *magos*, in fictional literature. A final section provides some conclusions.

1 Egypt after Cleopatra

The establishment of Roman rule in Egypt by the Emperor Augustus inaugurated a period of profound cultural and religious transformations.[1] The Hellenization of the country had already begun during the preceding centuries, when Egypt was governed from their capital Alexandria by the Ptolemies. Roman rule paradoxically favored the further implantation of Greek and the

1 For what follows, see D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); J. van der Vliet, "Ancient Egyptian Christianity," in *The Cambridge History of Religions of the Ancient World*, ed. W. Adler, M. Salzman, and M. Sweeney (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), vol. 2, 211–234, both with bibliography; and essays in C. Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

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rise of Hellenistic cities as centers of social and cultural life also in Upper Egypt. Remarkably, these southern cities produced several of the better known Greek poets and philosophers of late antiquity, such as Plotinus and Nonnus, as well as famous monastic authors, like Pachomius or Shenoute.

Brought under Roman government control, the Egyptian temples lost within a short time much of their former importance as economical and socio-political centers. Accordingly, the 'great tradition' of the ancient, state-supported ('Pharaonic') religion rapidly declined. Minor cults, often associated with relatively obscure gods like Bes and Tutu, gained in popularity. Religious alternatives of often oriental origin became more numerous, and variety appears to have been a major characteristic of religious life, at least in Roman Alexandria. Within a few centuries, Christianity became the most important of these alternatives to Greek or Egyptian style traditional religion. Following the rise of monasticism in the early years of the fourth century, new communal life-styles penetrated deeply into the Egyptian countryside, and even beyond, into remote desert areas. Monasticism rapidly became the backbone of Egyptian Christianity, as it still is today. Concomitantly, the Egyptian language, which had nearly disappeared from the written record, was revived in a strongly Hellenized and Christianized form, to become what we now know as Coptic.

Christianity was not the only new religious movement of Roman Egypt, however, nor had Egyptian Christianity ever been a unity in itself. Thus, Hermetism was not merely a high-flown mixture of Greek and indigenous philosophical traditions, but had definite cultic and social dimensions as well. The same applies to Neoplatonism in its various manifestations. Gnosticism had begun as a dualist current within second-century Christianity, but gradually grew into a religious movement of its own, close to and competing with Neoplatonism. The influence of Gnosticism in the Egyptian countryside till well in the fourth and fifth century is attested by important manuscript finds, like that of the Coptic Nag Hammadi codices. Another competitor of mainstream Christianity was Manichaeism, which thanks to its missionary fervor held a great appeal to fourth-century Egyptians.

Alexandria had become an influential center of Christian piety and scholarship from the second century onwards and logically this led to an early establishment of the Church in the rest of Egypt as well, where it grew rapidly from the reign of Constantine onwards. Yet, the Egyptian Church, although strongly focused on Alexandria, also from an organizational point of view, was repeatedly torn apart by local or supra-regional dissension. The best known episodes are those of the Arian and Meletian crises in the early fourth century, the Origenist controversy around 400, and the long-term conflict over

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Christology that followed the council of Chalcedon (451). The latter conflict gave rise to a major schism in the second half of the sixth century, when a parallel anti-Chalcedonian hierarchy was created, which found massive support in particular within monastic circles all over the country. This dissident church, now usually called 'miaphysite' (in replacement of older 'monophysite'), became the dominant church of Egypt and neighboring Nubia in the years following the Islamic conquest of Egypt (639–652). It is the ancestor of the present-day Coptic Orthodox Church.

2 Sources

The variety sketched above is reflected in a rich literary and archaeological record. The latter is witness to various forms of cultic and communal life, from the traditional temples and their re-use to Manichaean house-churches and early Christian monasteries. The written record, which is central to this chapter, covers a wide variety of sources in various languages. In addition to philosophical and theological treatises, it includes documents from everyday life, written in response to precise practical problems, as well as canonical collections that regulated in general terms the life of the Christian communities. Beyond legal prescriptions, and much more effectively, a rich homiletic and hagiographical literature transmitted the values of orthodox Christianity through public recitation within a liturgical setting.

Since Egypt was in the period under consideration a bilingual country, these sources are preserved either in Greek or in one of the several varieties of literary Coptic Egyptian, the most important of which are Sahidic and Bohairic. As a result of the Arabization of Egypt from the seventh century, some older Christian sources are known only in Arabic or even Ethiopic translations. Also a vast majority of the texts preserved in Coptic are actually translations from often lost Greek originals, which need not all have been composed originally in Egypt, but at least were current there.

3 Terminology

By far the most widespread way of referring to undesirable or illegitimate ritual practices in both principal languages of late-antique Egypt is by the originally Greek terms *mageia* and *pharmakeia*, which were very frequently coupled in this order. In the Egyptian pronunciation of Greek (and *a fortiori* in Coptic), this couple, like the related nouns *magos* and *pharmakos*, formed a rhyme, which must have made it particularly effective in oral reproduction, for example in

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sermons. Coptic often makes them rhyme also visually by spelling *magia* and *pharmagia*. It is not surprising therefore to find them repeated *ad nauseam* in the catalogues of sins that are among the favorite rhetorical tools of many a Christian preacher.[2] Although *pharmakeia* sometimes retains its original connotation of 'use of drugs, poisoning', *mageia* and *pharmakeia* appear to be synonymous in most of our sources. Also the nouns *magos* and *pharmakos*, denoting the practitioner, are common, again frequently combined, whereas the verbal derivations, *mageuo*, and in particular *pharmakeuo*, occur far more rarely.

In Coptic, in addition to the Greek loan words and less frequently than these, also words of indigenous derivation were used. These are in particular *hik*, for the practices, and the related *hako* (Sah.) / *acho* (Boh.), for the practitioner. Although *hik* derives etymologically from the ancient Egyptian word *heka*,[3] the latter term's positive connotations are lost and there is no way of telling *hik* semantically apart from the more frequent *mageia*. In the Bohairic Acts of the Martyrs, *er-hik* and *er-mageia* are synonymous verbs, constructed identically.[4]

In addition to *mageia* / *magos*, also the pair *goeteia* / *goes* is used, though hardly ever in Coptic. Coptic *refmoute*, literally 'speaker, caller', translates Greek *epoidos*, 'enchanter'. A *refšine*, by contrast, is literally an 'inquirer', that is a fortune-teller or diviner; the word may translate Greek *mantis*. For similar practices focused on the celestial bodies, Greek *astrologia* / *astrologos* is normally used, less frequently an indigenous term such as *refkaounou*, literally 'horoscoper'.

A common way of referring to both illicit ritual and its dreaded outcome is Coptic *mour*, 'bind, binding, bond', Greek *desmos* and related terms. In particular, feared are practices connected with the terms *phthonos* ('envy') and *baskania* / *baskosune* ('malignity'), for which Coptic sources may also use the term *i^{e}rboone*, literally 'the evil eye'.

In the following pages, the terms *mageia, pharmakeia* and *goeteia* as well as Egyptian *hik* (and related words from the same stems) are as a rule left untranslated, since they are often used as generic terms and therefore have a direct bearing upon the modern debate about 'magic'. In case of more specific

2 See Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 233, n. 1090; H. Behlmer, *Schenute von Atripe: De iudicio* (*Torino, Museo egizio, cat. 63000, cod. IV*). Catalogo del Museo egizio di Torino, 1st ser., Monumenti e testi, 8 (Turin: Museo egizio, 1996), 205, n. 71.

3 See J.F. Borghouts, "Magie", *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980), 1139.

4 See E.D. Zakrzewska, "Complex Verbs in Bohairic Coptic: Language and Valency," in *Argument Realization in Complex Predicates and Complex Events: Verb-Verb Constructions at the Syntax-Semantic Interface*, ed. B. Nolan and E. Diedrichser (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2017), 226–27.

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terminology, noteworthy technical terms are transcribed between brackets following a translation that is kept as 'flat' as possible. When texts are quoted after Arabic and Ethiopic translations, the terminology of the modern translators of these texts is retained (or anglicized) wherever the Coptic or Greek originals cannot be recovered.

4 Lethal Error

Ancient literary representations of deviant or illegitimate practices are hardly ever neutral or descriptive in nature. To the contrary, they are primarily instrumental in marking distinctions, both religious and intellectual, as arguments in a debate about religious or philosophical superiority. In the period under consideration here, this is apparent for example in the accusations brought forward against Jews and Christians, but also in the arguments of these same groups directed against the adherents of the traditional religions or competing groups.

Around 248, the Alexandrian theologian Origen (ca. 185–255), took great pains to refute Celsus, the well-informed and philosophically trained author of a treatise called *The True Doctrine*.[5] Celsus, who may have written in Alexandria in the second half of the second century, had raised a great number of objections against Christianity, among which that Christians "seem to derive power from the names of certain demons and incantations (*katakeleseis*)."[6] The miracles of Christ himself are compared to "the works of *goetai* who profess to perform wonderful tricks," such as can be admired "for a few obols" on the market square.[7] He ridiculed Christians who "use some sort of *mageia* and *goeteia* and invoke certain demons with barbarian names," and claimed to have actually seen "among certain (Christian) elders books containing barbarian names of demons and fabulous nonsense (*terateiai*)."[8] Celsus illustrated

5 For Celsus' *True Doctrine*, see H.E. Lona, *Die "Wahre Lehre" des Kelsos*. Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten 1 (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2005); cf. E.V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus*, SBL Dissertation Series 64 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); L. Perrone, ed. *Discorsi di verità: paganesimo, giudaismo e cristianesimo a confronto nel* Contro Celso *di Origene. Atti del II Convegno del Gruppo italiano di ricerca su "Origene e la tradizione alessandrina,"* Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum 61 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1998).

6 Quoted by Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.6, ed. and trans. M. Borret, *Origène, Contre Celse*, Sources chrétiennes 132, 136, 147, 150, 227 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1967–1976) cf. trans. H. Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

7 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.68.

8 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VI.39, 40.

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this by quoting a cosmological diagram, which is then reproduced and discussed by Origen in book VI of *Contra Celsum*.

Origen argues that the diagram, with its strange esoteric names, is not a creation of 'genuine Christians', but of a group that he called Ophites, that is of 'others'. Hence its modern name, the Ophite diagram.[9] In fact, the way in which the celestial powers are described in the diagram as quoted by Origen is closely paralleled in Christian Gnostic writings, such as *The Secret Book of John*.[10] Although Celsus was well-informed about the various apotropaic and ritual practices current in his time,[11] he appeals to *mageia* and *goeteia* mainly to condemn Christianity as unphilosophical. Origen's own position will be discussed below (in section 7).

In his major work *The Enneads*, the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus (ca. 205–270) devotes a long chapter to a refutation of the Gnostic teachings known to him.[12] Most of his argument is purely philosophical, but towards the end of the chapter he also attacks the ritual practices of the Gnostics, in particular their use of *goeteia*.[13] He reproaches them to defile the purity of the higher

9 The diagram has been much studied in its own right, see F. Ledegang, "The Ophites and the 'Ophite' Diagram in Celsus and Origen," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 60, no. 1 (2008): 51–83.

10 Ed. and trans. M. Waldstein and F. Wisse, *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2*. Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 33 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995). The best commentary remains M. Tardieu, *Écrits gnostiques: Codex de Berlin*, Sources gnostiques et manichéennes 1 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1984), 83–166 (annotated translation), 239–345 (commentary). See also R. van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 173–175.

11 See, for example *Contra Celsum*, VI.39.

12 Plotinus, *Enneads*, II.9 [33]. Plotinus' debate with the Gnostics generated considerable attention in recent years; some general titles are L. Brisson, "Plotin et les Gnostiques" in *Les textes de Nag Hammadi: histoire des religions et approches contemporaines. Actes du Colloque international réuni le 11 décembre 2008 à la foundation Simone et Cino del Duca et le 12 decémbre 2008 au palais de l'Institut de France*, ed. J.-P. Mahé, P.-H. Poirier, and M. Scopello (Paris, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres: 2010), 23–43; J.-M. Narbonne, *Plotinus in Dialogue with the Gnostics*, Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition 11 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2011); N. Spanu, *Plotinus, Ennead II 9 [33] "Against the Gnostics": A Commentary*, Studia Patristica Supplements 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012).

13 Plotinus, *Enneads* II.9 [33], 14; trans. R. Harder, R. Beutler, W. Theiller, *Plotins Schriften*, vol. IIIa, Philosophische Bibliothek 213a (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1964), 144–146; see also the annotated translation L. Brisson and J.-F. Pradeau, *Plotin, Traites 30–37* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), 226–228, and L. Brisson, "Plotinus and the Magical Rites Practiced by the Gnostics," in *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, ed. K. Corrigan and T. Rasimus (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2013), 443–63 with discussion of the terminology and further references; cf. N. Spanu, "The Magic of Plotinus' Gnostic Disciples in the Context of Plotinus' School of Philosophy," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 7 (2013): 1–14.

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world by addressing it through incantations (*epoidai*). Thus, in order to avert illness, they try to make incorporeal beings subject to the technically correct production of "*goeteiai* and charms and conjurations", through "songs and shouts and breathing and hissing sounds." He, moreover, ridicules their identification of physical ailments with demons that can be chased with words. This, he adds, may give them status with the masses "who are impressed by the feats of *magoi*." The practices of the Gnostics are not only offensive to the higher beings they pretend to invoke, they are also ridiculous (breathing, hissing) and simplistic. The discussion of their rituals is merely one in a series of arguments that serve to demarcate Plotinus' correct from the Gnostics' inept philosophy. As in Celsus' argument, the denounced ritual practices are the hallmark of intellectual inferiority.

Christian polemics against the traditional religions echo these arguments of irrationality and intellectual failure, but add a demonological perspective. From a Christian point of view, *mageia* is merely a specific form of a more general pagan subservience to the demons. In a way, according to Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215), the entire pagan cult, its oracles and mysteries have *goeteia* concealed within them, so as to make them loaded with a kind of contagious madness.[14] In fact, the pagans worship demons and, as Athanasius of Alexandria (died 373) argued in an influential passage, the demons through various ritual practices sought to involve the idolaters ever deeper in their service: "That is for sure why *mageiai* were taught among them (scil. the pagans), and divination (*manteia*) led men astray in every region, and they attributed the causes of their birth and their existence to the stars and all the heavenly bodies."[15] Christianity represents superior wisdom, which is confirmed by the victory of the Cross over "the illusion (*phantasia*) of the demons, the deceit of the oracles (*manteiai*), and the wonders of *mageia*."[16]

Both the Christian and the non-Christian polemics quoted above emphasize the irrationality of *mageia* and tend to associate it with fraud and deception.[17] Yet ritual practices could also be conceived as societally dangerous by both civil

14 Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* II, 11–12, ed. and trans. C. Mondésert and A. Plassart, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Le Protreptique*, Sources chrétiennes 2 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1949), 67–69.

15 Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 11, ed. and trans. R.W. Thomson, *Athanasius: Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

16 Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, 48.

17 Similarly, in the possibly Athanasian fragment, *On Amulets* (CPG II, 2165 [19]; ed. and trans. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 26, 1319–1320).

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and church authorities.[18] Here polemics may go beyond the mere affirmation of otherness and inferiority, to translate real-life tensions into religious terms and make accusations of illicit ritual a weapon against rivals.[19] By accusing the opponent's mother of *pharmakeia* one might possibly hope to influence the outcome of a lawsuit about land-ownership.[20] Episodes of religiously motivated violence reveal the same pattern. A well-informed though biased local source, the *Chronicle* of Bishop John of Nikiu (end of seventh century, but only preserved in a late Ethiopic version), describes the famous Hypatia of Alexandria (murdered in 415) in these terms:

> She was devoted at all times to magic, astrolabes and instruments of music, and she beguiled many people through satanic wiles. And the governor of the city honored her exceedingly, for she had beguiled him through her magic. And he ceased attending church as had been his custom.[21]

The violent action that the Upper-Egyptian monastic leader Shenoute of Atripe (died ca. 451) undertook against the traditional cult in the village of Pneuit is justified by an enumeration of the cultic objects captured during a raid. In addition to a statue of the ithyphallic local deity Pan-Min, these include a "book full of all sorts of *magia*."[22] Here, *magia* is merely a token for dangerous and demonic religion that needs to be abolished.

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18 See A. Lotz, *Der Magiekonflikt in der Spätantike*, Habelts Dissertationsdrucke, Reihe Alte Geschichte 48 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 2005), who deals extensively with legal aspects.

19 See P. Brown, "Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages," in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 119–146, rather uncritically followed by Lotz, *Der Magiekonflikt*, 184–248.

20 Second-century petition on papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (*P. Oxy.* III, 468, ln. 21), ed. and trans. B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. III (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1903).

21 John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, LXXXIV, 87–88, trans. R.H. Charles, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu*, Text and Translation Society 10 (London; Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1916. Reprint, Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1981), 100. See M. Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*. Revealing Antiquity 8 (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 90–91; cf. Lotz, *Der Magiekonflikt*, 187–89.

22 Shenoute, *I tell everyone who lives in this village*, ed. J. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii archimandritae Vita et opera omnia*, vol. III, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 42 (Paris: Poussielgue, 1908), 89. Cf. J. van der Vliet, "Spätantikes Heidentum in Ägypten im Spiegel der koptischen Literatur," in *Begegnung von Heidentum und Christentum im spätantiken Ägypten*, ed. D. Willers et al., Riggisberger Berichte 1 (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung. 1993), 106–108; D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 125–26; 68–69, 209. The traditional association of this text with the episode at Pneuit appears less certain now, however; see

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5 Sinners and Sanctions

The stigma of *mageia*, in addition to being imputed to 'others', could also adhere to members of the author's own group. Already Origen had to admit that certain Christians meddled in practices that he associated with "the Chaldaeans."[23] Early Christian canonical and similar normative literature, in spite of its negative bias, may yet provide an idea of how *mageia* was perceived societally, at least from a Christian point of view. A problem with these sources, and in general with normative Christian literature, is that it is difficult to distinguish between information that reflects contemporary social practices, on the one hand, and echoes of Holy Scripture, on the other. Thus the *Canons of Athanasius* stipulate that a repentant *magos* "shall burn all his books" and do a three years penance.[24] Books, which also figured in the Celsus and Shenoute quotes of the previous section, are considered a characteristic tool of the *magos*. This is by no means unlikely. Yet it should be remembered that, already in the New Testament book of Acts (19:19), ritualists "practicing superstition (*perierga*)" in Ephesus, impressed by the superior power of the Apostle Paul, burned their books.[25] Christian representations of undesirable ritual practices may in an often undefinable degree be shaped by biblical *topoi*.

In the Coptic *Questions of Cyril*, a fictitious dialogue between Cyril of Alexandria (died 444), and two deacons, one of them asks for a definition of the term *magos*. Pseudo-Cyril's answer runs as follows:

> These are men that read from books that invoke the Demon. For they find other words in them in other tongues, and they deny Christ without knowing what they say. Thus the Demon, on the other hand, rejoices about them, since they have become his. For he answers them in a humble voice. Yet, they do not dare to show themselves wherever the sign of the cross is.[26]

S. Emmel, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus*, vol 2, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 599–600 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 681.

23 See G. Bardy, "Origène et la magie," *Recherches de science religieuse* 18 (1928): 128–129.

24 *Canons of Athanasius* 72, ed. and trans. W. Riedel and W.E. Crum, *The Canons of Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, ca. 293–273*, Text and Translation Society 9 (London; Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1904. Reprint, Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1973), 40, 47, 108–109, 135–136.

25 See above, Sanzo, Chapter 10.

26 *The Questions of Cyril*, 7, ed. and trans. W.E. Crum, *Der Papyruscodex saec. VI–VII der Phillippsbibliothek in Cheltenham: Koptische theologische Schriften*, Schriften der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Strassburg 18 (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1915).

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Here, again, the *magos* is associated with books, but some additional information is given about these books. The *magos* is reciting (the Coptic verb for 'reading' implies 'reading aloud') from books that contain strange words in strange, unknown languages. Since he does not understand what he is reciting, he subjects himself to the devil without being aware of it. The strange words work, but foremost in the sense of creating a partnership between the *magos* and the devil. In a sense, one might say, the *magos* is not to be blamed, as he is merely misled.

Egyptian canonical literature, that is church law, devotes long paragraphs to those among the faithful, clerics or others, who consult *magoi* or are themselves involved in *mageia* or similar practices. The early *Traditio apostolica*, in Canon 41, sums up professions that could be an obstacle for admission into the catechumenate.

> Neither should a *magos* be submitted to judgement (scil. for admission). As for the enchanter (*refmoute*) or the astrologer (*astrologos*) or the wizard (*refšine*: 'inquirer') or the interpreter of dreams or the rabble-rouser or he who clips the borders of garments, that is to say the clippers,[27] or the fabricator of amulets (*phulakterion*), either they should stop or they should be thrown out.[28]

Interestingly, the *magos* is included here in a wider category of frauds and swindlers, but not associated with the pagan cult. 'Priest of the idols' and 'warden of the idols' had been mentioned earlier among various more normal, though undesirable offices and professions, such as actors and gladiators.

Later canonical collections, such as those attributed to Saints Basil and Athanasius, both exclusive to the Alexandrian tradition, pay fuller attention to *mageia* and its practitioners. The *Canons of Basil*, a late-antique pseudonymous collection, is undoubtedly the most explicit of these, and provides interesting insights into contemporary practices.[29] Its main concerns are with astrology

27 Perhaps "counterfeiters", see B. Botte, "ΨΕΛΛΙΣΤΗΣ-ΨΑΛΙΣΤΗΣ", *Revue des études byzantines* 16 (1958): 162–65; the parallel section in the Arabic *Canons of Hippolytus*, canon 15 has "snake charmers" instead (ed. and trans. R.-G. Coquin, *Les Canons d'Hippolyte*, Patrologia orientalis 31/2 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1966), 100–103).

28 *Traditio apostolica*, ed. and trans. W. Till and J. Leipoldt, *Der koptische Text der Kirchenordnung Hippolyts*, Texte und Untersuchungen 58 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1954), 10–12.

29 Here quoted after Riedel's German translation of the Arabic, see W. Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1900), 231–83; a well preserved Coptic version has recently been discovered in Western Thebes (publication forthcoming); see A. Camplani and F. Contardi, "The Canons Attributed to Basil of Caesarea. A New Coptic Codex," in *Coptic Society, Literature and Religion from Late*

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and various forms of fortune-telling as well as with illegitimate apotropaic and healing practices. Canon 34 (Arabic), which is about "the great sin of becoming an astrologer or going to an astrologer or a magician, enchanter or wizard," quotes Deut. 18:10 with some additions: "you shall not (…) bind amulets (*phulakterion*) at hands of your children, nor go to an astrologer, a magician or a wizard; you shall not anoint your children with impure oil." It then goes on to compare the 'impure oil' and the 'enchanted water' of the magician with the ingredients used in the administration of the Christian sacraments: baptism, the Eucharist, and the ointment of the sick.[30]

Canon 35 (Arabic), "about a Christian who goes to a magician and asks him about something," is also mainly concerned with healing and apotropaic practices:

> When a Christian goes to a magician and then gets replies from him like: wait till the sun rises and then do this or that, or: wait for the moon, or: when the sun is at its zenith take water and bathe the patient with it, or: when the sun sets, say this or that over oil and anoint him with it, or: wear amulets, or: fasten strong iron on yourself, which will chase the demons away, since the demons fear iron,—why then … (etc.)?

Here again these practices are explicitly contrasted with legitimate church ritual:

> No priest shall pray over him, no one will anoint him with oil from the church in his illness. (…) The holy oil of the altar has nothing in common with the oil of impurity that serves enchantment and the prayer of the priest has nothing in common with amulets that serve enchantment![31]

More serious offences are merely hinted at. Canon 34 (Arabic) briefly and enigmatically refers to 'blood sorcery', quoting the case of a layman who "goes to an astrologer or a magician or a wizard, takes blood from a dead person and performs sorcery."[32] Equally briefly mentioned is erotic magic, condemned in Canon 21 (Arabic): "when someone brings down a woman by sorcery and has sex with her," he will for the rest of his life be excluded from communion.[33] By

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Antiquity to Modern Times: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Rome, September 17th–22nd, 2012, ed. P. Buzi, A. Camplani, and F. Contardi, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 247 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), vol. 2, 979–992.

30 *The Canons of Basil*, trans. W. Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen*, 251–253.

31 *The Canons of Basil*, 253–54.

32 *The Canons of Basil*, 251.

33 *The Canons of Basil*, 243.

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comparison much more innocent practices, such as various healing and protective rites, receive far more attention. These practices were probably seen as rather harmless by many, as they still are today in traditional Mediterranean societies, which made it particularly urgent to draw very sharply the lines that demarcate them from often similar rites administered by the church, such as ointment of the sick, prayers, or sprinkling with holy water. On a local level, therefore, the cited canons were instrumental in establishing church authority vis-à-vis non-ecclesiastical practices and practitioners.

The same concern is apparent in a Coptic sermon about, among other things, "those who practice the abomination of the gentiles that is *i^{e}rboone* ('evil eye')", attributed to Athanasius.[34] Important passages of this sermon are directed against practices apparently current among the Christians of his time. Many of them are, as the author states, misled into "worshiping the forms of the artificers (*poietes*) of the demons, which they have invented deceitfully from the beginning, making the people believe that they are remedies (*therapeia*) for them."[35] Following an ancient apologetic tradition, the author blames the artistic representations of the pagan gods, either in art or in poetry, for seducing the people into invoking them in order to obtain health (cf. Clement of Alexandria, quoted above in the previous section). While weaving terrifying Old Testament examples into his argument, he also quotes reports about "the abominations" that take place in the towns and villages of Egypt:

> There are some who wash their children in putrid water and water of the theater. There are some who wash their children in putrid water and water of the theater contest, and also who pour enchanted water (*henmoou mmoute*) over them, breaking their pottery vessels saying: 'We chase the evil eye (*i^{e}rboone*)'. Some bind amulets (*phulakterion*) upon their children that have been fabricated by those very people that are dwelling places of the demons. Others anoint them with evil oils, and tie incantations (*henmoute*) and still other objects on their heads and their necks.[36]

The customs to which the author refers are simple apotropaic and healing rites roughly similar in character to those quoted in the *Canons of Basil*. The "water of the theatre contest" has been interpreted as a rare Coptic echo of

34 Pseudo-Athanasius, *In s. Mariam virginem*, 15, ed. and trans. L. Th. Lefort, "L'homélie de S. Athanase des papyrus de Turin," *Le Muséon* 71 (1958) 5–50; 209–39.

35 Pseudo-Athanasius, *In s. Mariam virginem*, 35.

36 Pseudo-Athanasius, *In s. Mariam virginem*, 36, ln. 6–14.

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the widespread use of *strigmentum olei*,[37] whereas the breaking of pottery vessels is a well attested Egyptian apotropaic rite.[38] Here, they seem to be performed for children only, but this is probably to make them better fit the biblical examples that are quoted in this context (such as Deut. 18:10; 2 Kings 21:6; Jer. 7:31). For, the author insists, "everybody who brings his young children to the enchanters (*refmoute*) differs in nothing from him who sacrifices them to the demons."[39] Instead, he advises to bring them to the church for prayer and ointment, quoting James 5:13. In particular, however, he recommends the sick to go and visit the sanctuaries of the martyrs of which he names several, situated in Alexandria: "when they merely touch them (scil. the tombs of the martyrs), every illness disappears immediately!"[40] The author uses throughout heavy rhetorical weapons, charged with biblical authority, to identify popular healing and protective rites as demonic, and contrast them to legitimate ritual that is connected with church institutions.

Yet, even the tombs of the martyrs, recommended by Pseudo-Athanasius as an ecclesiastical alternative for "the enchanters," are not uncontested in contemporaneous literature. Several late antique authors criticize habits connected with the cult of the martyrs. Part of the criticism targets lewd and criminal behavior during the popular festivals of the martyrs, but some of it is concerned precisely with ambiguous ritual practices.

Following earlier polemics by Athanasius, the Upper-Egyptian author Shenoute is most explicit in condemning various aspects of the cult of the martyrs' relics.[41] In a lengthy "Exegesis … about those who honor the bones of corpses giving them the empty name of 'martyrs'" (*Those who work evil*),[42] he points out the uncertainty that surrounds many of the so-called martyrs' relics, and criticizes the exaggerated veneration granted to such doubtful relics. As it appears from these pages, he is critical of the practice of incubation, sleeping on the martyrs' tombs in order to obtain healing or revelations, a practice that was certainly widespread at the time. He mentions "kinds of oracles or ventriloquists (that) have come to light in these times, under the pretext of bones of corpses that had been found in the earth. We reproved the frauds (?) on account of this abuse, in (which) the Christians and clerics from the house of

37 J. van der Vliet, "Varia magica coptica," *Aegyptus* 71 (1991): 225–26.

38 See Ritner, *Mechanics*, 144–153; D. Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 22–23, 37.

39 Pseudo-Athanasius, *In s. Mariam virginem*, 39, ln. 4–6.

40 Pseudo-Athanasius, *In s. Mariam virginem*, 39, ln. 24–45.

41 See L. Th. Lefort, "La chasse aux reliques des martyrs en Égypte au IV^{e} siècle," *La nouvelle Clio* 6 (1954): 225–30; Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 193.

42 On this work by Shenoute, see Emmel, *Shenoute*, vol. 2, 669–70.

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God had become implied."[43] His terminology clearly refers to divination, practiced with the bones of pretended martyrs. By putting these Christians on the same level as "those who sleep in the tombs for the sake of dreams or question the dead for the sake of the living," he explicitly ranks popular aspects of the cults of the martyrs' relics, in particular incubation to obtain healing or revelations, with illegitimate ritual. In this respect, Shenoute conforms to imperial legislation.[44] The fierceness of his criticism, however, has definitely a different background. Shenoute's negative view of the veneration of relics (obviously, not of martyrs or martyrdom as such) must be read against the background of both the debate about the heritage of martyrdom aroused by the Meletian schism of the fourth century and monastic criticism of traditional mortuary practices.[45] Considered thus, his polemic is primarily about the dispensation of supernatural power. The relics of the saint are denied a power of their own independent of Athanasian orthodoxy and outside of the purely spiritual worship that Christianity demands according to monastic standards.

The works of Shenoute are in general rich in references to persistent traditional cults and popular practices, often conveniently stigmatized as 'pagan' or 'heretic'.[46] Explicitly directed against "Christians who limp on two legs" (cf. 1 Kg 18:21) is a passage from an acephalous work that may be quoted here at length:

43 Shenoute of Atripe, *Those who work evil*, 219–220, ed. and trans. E.C. Amélineau, *Oeuvres de Schenoudi* (Paris: Leroux, 1907–1914), vol. I, 212–221.

44 Cf. E. Wipszycka, "Saint Claude à Pohe: un exemple de fonctionnement d'un sanctuaire de pèlerinage dans l'Égypte de l'Antiquité tardive," in *Aegyptus et Nubia Christiana. The Włodzimierz Godlewski Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. A. Łajtar, A. Obłuski, and I. Zych (Warsaw: Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, 2016), 296–297, who quotes imperial legislation against incubation. For the archaeological evidence from Egypt, see P. Grossmann, "Late antique Christian incubation centers in Egypt," in *Salute e guarigione nella tarda antichità: atti della giornata tematica dei Seminari di Archeologia Cristiana, Roma, 20 maggio 2004*, ed. H. Brandenburg, S. Heid, and C. Markschies, Sussidi allo studio delle antichità cristiane 19 (Vatican: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2007), 125–140. Incubation is discussed also elsewhere in Shenoute, see Amélineau, *Oeuvres de Schenoudi*, 2, 205 ("those who sleep in the cemeteries because of illness").

45 Meletian schism and martyrdom: H. Hauben, "The Melitian 'Church of the Martyrs': Christian Dissenters in Ancient Egypt," in *Ancient History in a Modern University*, vol. 2: *Early Christianity, Late Antiquity and Beyond*, ed. T.W. Hillard, R.A. Kearsley, C.E.V. Nixon, and A.M. Nobbs (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 329–349; monastic criticism: J. van der Vliet, "Bringing Home the Homeless: Landscape and History in Egyptian Hagiography," in *The Encroaching Desert: Egyptian Hagiography and the Medieval West*, ed. J. Dijkstra and M. van Dijk (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2006), 44–48.

46 See J. van der Vliet, "Spätantikes Heidentum," 118–120.

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> In times of trouble, however, when they fall victim to poverty or illness or whatever other temptations, they leave God behind and hurry to enchanters (*refmoute*) or oracles or, indeed, they have turned to other works of deceit, as I saw myself the head of the snake bound on the hand of some. With another the tooth of the crocodile is bound on his arms; yet another has the claws of foxes bound on his feet. In particular, a magistrate (*archon*) thought of himself as clever, for when I had blamed him, saying: 'Will fox claws then heal you?'—he said: 'A respectable monk gave them to me, saying: "Bind them upon you, and you will recover!"'
>
> Listen to these impieties! Fox claws, snake's heads, crocodile teeth and many other vanities in which men put their trust to be healed, while others mislead them! It is likewise with those who anoint themselves with oil or pour water over themselves, having received these from enchanters or drugs dealers, and every kind of solace that misleads them. And after they have said [...] there was again water poured over them or they were anointed with oil by the priests of the Church or indeed by monks. [...] Thus, then, you who do these things or put your trust in these things, till when do you limp on both your feet? When the oracles of the demons are profitable to you and the enchanters (*refmoute*) and the drugs dealers and all the others that similarly perpetuate lawlessness, then go to them in order to obtain a curse upon earth and eternal punishment on the Day of Judgment! But when the house of God, the church, is profitable to you, then go there![47]

Apart from the sociologically interesting fact that by the fifth century "respectable monks" had apparently become experts in marginal healing practices, providing even the rich and powerful with amulets,[48] the main interest of this passage lies again in its way of contrasting church approved and illegitimate apotropaic ritual. Just like the *Canons of Basil* and the Pseudo-Athanasian sermon, quoted earlier, Shenoute is mainly concerned with competing strategies for coping with misfortune.

47 Shenoute of Atripe, acephalous work A14, 18–20, par. 255–62, published (erroneously) as part of *I am amazed*, ed. and trans. T. Orlandi, *Shenute: Contra Origenistas* (Rome: CIM, 1985), 16–21. Cf. Emmel, *Shenoute*, vol. 2, 692–93.

48 Cf. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 214–17.

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6 Death and Mishap

Given the enormous amount of papyri and ostraca that survive as witnesses to daily life and the no less considerable amount of so-called magical texts from late antique Egypt (see below, Chapter 14), it is astonishing that only very few real-life documents inform us about deviant ritual practices. An interesting case of a farmer who was robbed of his harvest by the *phthonos* of his neighbors is offered by a late second century petition from the Fayyum (*P. Mich.* VI, 423–424). The theft was committed with the help of a binding ritual involving the handling of a fetus, which prevented the victim's resistance.[49] Much later, in *P. Pisentius* 38, 6, a Coptic letter probably from the correspondence of Bishop Pisentius of Koptos (died 632), a woman is described as "bewitching (*mageuo*) the boys (or, the sons [of …])." Given the (much damaged) context, a report about a broken marriage, this most likely refers to her sex appeal, not to any ritual activity. *O. Brit. Mus. Copt.* II, 3, a clergyman's declaration from the early seventh century, has been taken by its editor to refer to an accusation of illegitimate healing, brought forward against a certain Papas. The lexical uncertainties of the text are considerable, however, and the accusation more likely concerns the use of rude language.

Faced with the relative poverty of documentary texts, we have to turn to other sources in order to learn more about actual social practices. Below, two types of sources are considered: prayers and similar apotropaic texts that were deemed to counteract harmful ritual behavior and hagiographical texts.

The belief that misfortune, of whatever nature, was caused by the hostile agency of humans or spirits was widespread, as it is still today in the Mediterranean. In the highly burlesque Sahidic *Martyrdom of Saint Isidore*, the Emperor Diocletian enters a bathhouse together with his dignitaries, after lengthy altercations with the martyr. He seats himself upon a wooden bench, which gives way under his weight, and he breaks his leg. He is in no doubt about the real culprit, and starts to shout: "the Christians have bewitched (*mageuo*) me, in order that I die and stop persecuting them!"[50] A perhaps second-century epitaph from Alexandria records the death of a girl Hermion and voices the suspicion that she may have fallen victim to *pharmakeia*.[51] It belongs to a

49 See the extensive discussion in D. Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt," *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62. Another Greek papyrus document, *P. Oxy.* III, 468, was already quoted above (note 20).

50 *Martyrdom of Saint Isidore*, 154–156, ed. and trans. H. Munier, "Les actes du martyre de Saint Isidore," *BIFAO* 14 (1914): 97–190.

51 E. Bernard, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine: Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des Grecs en Égypte*, Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon 98 (Paris: Belles lettres, 1969), no. 46; cf. the somewhat earlier no. 64, also from Alexandria.

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greater class of funerary inscriptions that explain the early and unexplained death of a relative in similar terms.[52]

From the sole term *pharmakeia* in the epitaph, it cannot be decided whether straightforward poisoning was meant or some form of sorcery. Most likely, no such distinction was made in Roman Egypt, where the interference of evil influences in daily life, human or demonic in nature, was a household reality. A polite wish in Coptic letters from ecclesiastical circles is "that the Lord (…) may save you from the plots of men and the snares of the Enemy."[53] This epistolary formula echoes church liturgy,[54] and is found with variations in amulets as well. Thus a Christian amulet should "preserve this house with all its inhabitants from all envy (*baskosune*) of spirits of the air and eye of humans."[55] In a more or less formal way, evil and in particular envious men associate with the sources of evil, the demons and the devil, which makes their influence go beyond the domain of visible, earthly action. The best known example of a formal pact with the devil is a literary personage, Cyprian the magician, discussed below (in section 8). Accordingly, following an Arabic prayer that claims to derive from Cyprian himself:

> When I was in the service of Satan (…) I bound heaven, so that no rain poured down from it upon the earth, and the earth, so that it did not produce its crops, and the trees, so that they did not bear their fruits, and the fish of the see likewise—and also women could not bear their children at term. Every time I passed by sheep, I aborted what was in their womb. All this was within my power through the excess of my wickedness and my sins.[56]

52 Studied most recently by F. Graf, "Untimely Death, Witchcraft, and Divine Vengeance: A Reasoned Epigraphical Catalogue," *ZPE* 167 (2007): 139–150.

53 For instance, *O. Brit. Mus. Copt.* I, 14040+14156, ln. 13–15, Thebes, 6th–8th century, ed. H.R. Hall, *Coptic and Greek Texts of the Christian Period from Ostraka, Stelae, etc. in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1905), pl. LXXI, 1.

54 See e.g. Sahidic liturgies in E. Lanne, *Le grand Euchologe du Monastère blanc*, Patrologia orientalis 28/2 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1958): 286 [22], ln. 12–13: "save us from the plots of the enemies, unvisible and visible"; similarly, 318 [54], ln. 10–13.

55 *PGM*, P3 = *ACM* 26.

56 Pseudo-Cyprian of Antioch, *Prayer*, 260–263, ed. and trans. F. Bilabel and A. Grohmann, *Griechische, koptische und arabische Texte sur Religion und religiöse Literatur in Ägyptens Spätzeit*. Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrus-Sammlungen 5 (Heidelberg: Universitätsbibliothek, 1934), 259–295.

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The single glance of a man like 'Cyprian' passing by a herd of sheep was sufficient to cause miscarriages.[57]

Much of ancient apotropaic ritual was intended to avert evil influences emanating from other men and often designated as 'the (evil) eye' or as 'envy' (*phthonos*) or 'malignity' (*baskania*).[58] The rite of breaking pottery vessels, described by the Pseudo-Athanasian sermon, quoted above, was meant to "chase the evil eye (*i^{e}rboone*)."[59] Also verbal means were used to avert these harmful influences. For example, the acclamations that throughout late antiquity were addressed to the rich and mighty. Thus, the Upper-Egyptian poet and lawyer Dioscorus of Aphrodite (ca. 520–585) greeted the accession of Emperor Justin II (565–578) with the wish "that creeping envy (*phthonos*) may forever be far from your throne", using a verb that suggests the stealthy movement of the serpent.[60]

Prayers and ritual handbooks are sometimes quite specific about the evil practices that were dreaded. Coptic handbooks, such as the Macquarie handbook (*P. Macquarie* 1), may prescribe the use of a ritual in a series of often numbered cases. Thus the Macquarie codex provides for three cases involving *hik*: no. 17 ('for somebody on whom *hik* was practiced'), no. 17bis ('for every kind

57 References to sorcery on cattle are particularly frequent in Coptic sources, see e.g. The Heidelberg *Praise of the Archangel Michael*, ed. and trans. A. Kropp, *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael* (*vormals P. Heidelberg Inv. Nr. 1686*) (Brussels: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1966), ln. 270, 56–57; W.H. Worrell, "A Coptic Wizard's Hoard," *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 46 (1929–1930): 249; Pseudo-Shenoute of Atripe, *Apocalypse*, ed. J. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii archimandritae Vita et opera omnia*, vol. IV, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 73 (Paris: Gabalda, 1913), 199; Phoibammon of Panopolis, *Second Homily on Saint Collouthos*, ed. U. Zanetti, "Les miracles arabes de Saint Kolouthos (ms. Saint-Macaire, hagiog. 35)," in *Aegyptus christiana: mélanges d'hagiographie égyptienne et orientale dédiés à la mémoire du P. Paul Devos, Bollandiste*, ed. E. Lucchesi and U. Zanetti, Cahiers d'Orientalisme 25 (Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 2004), 49.

58 General and Christian: B. Kötting, "Böser Blick," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1954), 473–482; J. Engemann, "Zur Verbreitung magischer Übelabwehr in der nichtchristlichen und christlichen Spätantike," *JAC* 18 (1975): 22–48; cf. J. Engemann, "Anmerkungen zu philologischen und archäologischen Studien über spätantike Magie," *JAC* 43 (2000): 55–70 and M.W. Dickie, "The Fathers of the Church and the Evil Eye," in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library), 9–34.

59 See, also for the Egyptian background, W. Spiegelberg, "Der böse Blick im altägyptischen Glauben," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 59 (1924): 149–54.

60 J.-L. Fournet, *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte du VI^{e} siècle: la bibliothèque et l'oeuvre de Dioscore d'Aphrodité*, Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale 115/1–2 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale: 1999), I, 409–11, cf. II, 574–75, *ad* ln. 21–22. Cf. also M.W. Dickie, "Dioscorus and the Impotence of Envy," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 30 (1993): 63–66.

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of *hik*') and no. 18 ('in case it concerns burial *hik*').[61] The latter designation, 'burial *hik*', is unique and could refer to any practices invoking or engaging the dead (cf. also the 'blood sorcery', in the *Canons of Basil*, cited above, section 5).

A prayer of the Virgin Mary from another handbook, the so-called *Book of Mary and the Angels*, identifies the dangers that it was supposed to avert in a more explicit way as:

> Every activity in which there is envy (*phthonos*), all *magia* and *pharmagia* (that) happen through wicked and meddlesome people, whether blindness, or lameness, or speechlessness, or headache, or attack of the demons, either having a fever, or being troubled, or depressed, or bleeding ... .[62]

The couple *magia—pharmagia* appears here as the instrument of the envy of "wicked and meddlesome people" that may cause a wide variety of undesirable effects.

Another apotropaic prayer proposes a classification of these "wicked people". Attributed to Saint Gregory the Wonderworker (Thaumaturgus), this long prayer remained popular in the Mediterranean world till quite recently. The early Coptic version, preserved in a late antique ritualist's handbook now in Leiden, states as its purpose:

> That it may undo all influences that happen through evil men, that is *hik* and enchantment (*moute*) and binding (*mour*) of men with various illnesses and envy (*phthonos*) and jealousy and unemployment, that is finding no work to do, in brief, every [practice] that we know and do not know ... (etc.).[63]

It then invokes the "violent deeds" against which it offers protection and bids them:

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61 Ed. and trans., M. Choat and I. Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 70, with commentary on page 103.

62 *The Book of Mary and the Angels*, 14, ed. and trans. M. Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels* (*P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685*): *Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrussammlung N.F. 9 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1996).

63 *Prayer of Saint Gregory the Wonderworker*, 441–42, ed. W. Pleyte and P.A.A. Boeser, *Manuscrits coptes du Musée des antiquités des Pays-Bas à Leide* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1897), 441–54.

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> That each of you will descend upon the head of the one who sent you to perform these abominations and upon the head of those who sympathize with them, whether he be a stranger or an insider or a passer-by, whether he be a servant or a free man, a (male) *magos* or a female *magos*, a male Persian or a female Persian, a (male) Chaldean or a female Chaldean, a (male) Hebrew or a female Hebrew, a (male) Egyptian or a female Egyptian, briefly, whoever it may be.[64]

The enumeration tries to be as inclusive, which explains its insistence on complementary gender (male-female), and devotes a large space to prototypical 'outsiders', that is foreigners. These were chosen from nations that were traditionally famous as *magoi*.[65] The Greek version, moreover, adds Syrians, Asians, Indians, Gauls and Africans to the list.[66] Yet, the evildoers could be "insiders" as well. Indeed, the home and its dependencies were not seen as a safe haven, but rather as the focus of dreaded practices:

> Or if someone bound (*mour*) a place by having placed the bond (*m^{e}rre*) of deceit in it, hidden in its foundations or in its open grounds, in its entrance or in its exit, in the door or in the window, in the bedroom or in the stable, in the dining room or in the central courtyard, in the fields or in the fruit or in the orchards, in a garment {or two or three}, or in the ⟨trees that bear fruit⟩[67] or the trees that do not bear fruit, in the waters that are in the rivers or the fields or the gardens or wherever.[68]

Hostile "binding" was feared in particular in one's own home or even in one's own clothes. Such fear explains the apotropaic symbolism of doorways, dress and personal adornment, or the widespread negative acclamations of the type "may the envious one (*phthonon*) perish", written on the walls of houses, also in Egypt, for example in one of the monasteries of Kellia.[69]

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64 *Prayer of Saint Gregory the Wonderworker*, Coptic, 445–446.

65 Cf. the Nubian sorcery in *Setne* II, trans. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. III: The Late Period (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 142–51.

66 *Prayer of Saint Gregory the Wonderworker*, Greek, ed. A. Strittmatter, "Ein griechisches Exorzismusbüchlein: Ms. Car. C 143b der Zentralbibliothek in Zürich," *Orientalia Christiana* 20 (1932): 142.

67 The text of this passage seems in disorder.

68 *Prayer of Saint Gregory the Wonderworker*, Coptic, 444–445.

69 Kellia inscription: J.-L. Fournet, "Quelques remarques sur des inscriptions grecques des Kellia (Égypte) récemment éditées," *ZPE* 117 (1997): 163–64; apotropaic symbolism, general: Engemann, "Anmerkungen"; art: H. Maguire, "Magic and the Christian image," in

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The techniques that malevolent people could use are illustrated by yet another prayer, this time for a woman to become pregnant:

> O God of gods and Lord of lords, whether a person has bound (*mour*) an amulet (*phulakterion*) against her, or whether somebody gave her an enchanted (*moute*) cup (to drink), or whether it is something coming from you, may the bond of her womb be undone![70]

The text cites three possible reasons why a woman might remain barren: binding by an amulet, enchantment by a potion, or some intervention by God himself. The first two causes require active human involvement. [71] The identity of the sorcerer is not specified here, but it can hardly be anyone who is not an insider, someone from the immediate surroundings of the victim.

Indeed, sex, marital life, and reproduction were at the focus of a wide variety of malign influences and practices. Married life was endangered by *phthonos* and *baskania*, as can be seen for example in an epithalamium by Dioscorus of Aphrodite,[72] but also by more specific ritual action, such as was condemned by the *Canons of Basil* (quoted above, in section 5).[73] The handbook of the Heidelberg *Praise of the Archangel Michael* prescribes a ritual "(for) somebody

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Byzantine Magic, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 1995), 51–71; dress: J. van der Vliet, "'In a Robe of Gold:' Status, Magic and Politics on Inscribed Christian Textiles from Egypt," in *Textile Messages: Inscribed Fabrics from Roman to Abbasid Egypt*, ed. C. Fluck, G. Helmecke. Studies in Textile and Costume History 4 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2006), 29–30; 36–41; personal adornment: A. van den Hoek, D. Feissel, and J.J. Hermann, "Lucky Wearers: A Ring in Boston and a Greek Epigraphic Tradition of Late Roman and Byzantine times," *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 6 (1994): 41–62, all with further references. For the famous wall-painting of Saint Sisinnios, the demon Alabasdria and the *oculus invidiosus*, in another Egyptian monastery, Bawit, see P. Perdrizet, *Negotium perambulans in tenebris: études de démonologie gréco-orientale*, Publications de la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg 6 (Strasbourg; Paris: Istra, 1922); cf. J. van der Vliet, "Varia magica," 232–33; D. Bénazeth, "Calques de Baouit archivés à l'Ifao." *BIFAO* 105 (2005): 3–5.

70 Ed. L.S.B. MacCoull, "*P.Morgan Copt.*: Documentary Texts from the Pierpont Morgan Library," *Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte* 24 (1979–1982): 10–12; trans. *ACM* 83, readings corrected after the photo in L. Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, vol. II, Corpus van verluchte handschriften 4–5 (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), no. 306, pl. 445.

71 Cf. case no. 7 in the Heidelberg *Praise of the Archangel Michael* 257: "(for) somebody to whom a cup has been given." See Kropp, *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael*, 53.

72 Fournet, *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte du VI^e siecle*, no. 34 (vol. I, 436–437; II, 629–633).

73 For a curious (medieval) letter of a bishop pronouncing a curse over the person who had disturbed the marital life (this is the correct interpretation) of a priest through sorcery, see K. Reinhardt, "Eine arabisch-koptische Kirchenbann-Urkunde," in *Aegyptiaca:*

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who has been bound (*mour*) so as to make him unable to have intercourse with his wife."[74]

Hagiographical literature abounds in juicy stories about *magoi* interfering with sex and marital life.[75] A famous example, known in various versions from the literature about Saint Macarius the Egyptian, describes how a man fell in love with a married woman, who did not accept his advances, however. He went to a sorcerer (Bohairic *acho*; Greek *goes*) who should "either force her to love me or let hate grow between her and her husband so that he turns her out and I take her as my wife". Yet the *goes*, after having received "a lot of gold from him", only succeeded in turning the woman into a horse in the eyes of her husband. Of course, the story was brought to a good end by the holy man Macarius.[76]

Similar stories about erotic magic going wrong are found frequently in the collections of miracles that were meant to substantiate the reputation of popular healing saints.[77] Among the *Miracles of Saint Collouthus*, a story relates how an exceedingly jealous husband did not want his young and beautiful wife to remarry after his death. He resorted to *pharmagia* and inserted a sheet of tin inscribed with formulae in his boots. The text stipulated that she should not marry any other man until her death On his deathbed, the man makes his wife promise to bury him in these particular boots. So it happens and the widow rapidly loses her health and her beauty. Thanks to the intervention of Saint Collouthus, however, she is able to break the spell. Members of her family dig

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Festschrift für Georg Ebers (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1897; reprint Wiesbaden: LTRVerlag, 1981), 89–91.

74 *Praise of the Archangel Michael*, 256, Kropp, *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael*, 53.

75 An early example, from Jerome's *Life of Hilarion*, is discussed in F. Graf, "How to Cope with a Difficult Life: A View of Ancient Magic," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg, Studies in the History of Religions 75 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 93–96; see also J. Wortley, "Some Light on Magic and Magicians in Late Antiquity," *GRBS* 42 (2001): 289–307.

76 Discussed in D. Frankfurter, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 480–500, with reference to its various versions; here quoted after the Bohairic in M. Chaîne, "La double recension de l'Histoire lausiaque dans la version copte," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 25 (1926): 242–44.

77 On the Egyptian collections of miracles of healing saints, see R. Boutros, "L'hagiographie des saints thérapeutes: une source pour l'histoire religieuse des pèlerinages en Égypte," in *Études coptes X: Douzième journée d'études (Lyon, 19–21 mai 2005)*, ed. A. Boud'hors and C. Louis, Cahiers de la Bibliothèque copte 16 (Paris: De Boccard, 2008), 229–48.

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up the husband and throw the tin sheet into the Nile. The woman recovers and donates the shrine of the saint with rich gifts.[78]

Another story from the same collection, describes a man falling in love with a girl who is both very beautiful and virtuous. In order to gain her favors, he obtains from a famous sorcerer, for a fair amount of money, a piece of paper inscribed with magical formulae. At night he throws it, folded, into the river, where it is swallowed by a fish, however. The girl turns mad and moves to and fro on the riverside, since she is forced to follow the fish wherever it goes. Finally, of course, the fish is caught and in its belly the piece of paper is found and opened. It contained the names of the girl and the love-sick man and said that she would not find rest as long as she did not come to him and fulfill the desire of his heart. Only after the spell was washed out, the girl was restored to her former health. The text adds that the affair was not made known to the authorities in order to protect the man against being punished.[79]

In a similar story from the *Miracles of Saint Mercurius*, the *magos* uses a figurine (*zoidion*) of the girl and is merely able to inflict her with a lasting and terrible headache.[80] Holy doctors, like Mercurius and Collouthus, are the best remedies not only against "all ailments of body and soul", but also against the various kinds of ritual intervention solicited by desperate lovers or jealous husbands.

The stories quoted here and similar ones were definitely meant as propaganda for the cults of the healing saints whom they glorify, not as anthropological reports. Yet they would miss their effect if they would not somehow offer credible scenarios.

7 Scholars and Mythographers

The general Christian conception of *mageia* and related practices is that, even in so far as they involve the activity of human beings, they derive their power from the demons or the devil. In particular, the various manifestations of envy (*phthonos*) and malignity (*baskania*) are intrinsically linked to the devil himself. Since "through the envy (*phthonos*) of the devil, death came into

78 *Miracles of Saint Collouthus*, no. 6, ed. U. Zanetti, "Les miracles arabes," 75–78, 98–100, Arabic with reference to the fragmentary Sahidic.

79 *Miracles of Saint Collouthus*, no. 14, ed. U. Zanetti, "Les miracles arabes," 81–84, 103–106, Arabic.

80 *Miracles of Saint Mercurius*, no. 7, ed. and trans. T. Orlandi and S. Di Giuseppe Camaioni, *Passione e miracoli di S. Mercurio*. Testi e documenti per lo studio dell'antichità 54 (Milan: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1976), 95–115; no. 8, E.A.W. Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1915), 273–82 (incomplete).

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the world" (Wisdom 2:24), envy remained his most essential characteristic, of which human envy is but a derivative.[81] The following paragraphs will briefly discuss some sources that consider the origin, the nature and the limits of *mageia* and related activities.

Athanasius, in a passage from *De Incarnatione* 11, quoted above, argues in a general way that, through the cult of demons, man—turning away from God—became involved in *mageia* and astrology. Other ancient Christian sources adhere to the idea that, more specifically, the fallen angels revealed, among other things, *mageia* and astrology to primitive man. The origin of this idea is usually sought in 1 Enoch 8, but it was commonplace amongst ancient Jewish and Christian authors.[82] Thus, the lengthy Gnostic treatise called *Pistis Sophia* describes the "practices of *mageia*" that enable human beings to invoke the archons, the evil rulers of the lower world, as "mysteries, which have been brought down by the angels who trespassed."[83]

Another Egyptian Gnostic source that elaborates this view is the treatise *On the Origin of the World*, which recounts how the seven heavenly archons, cast down from their heavens upon the earth, started to create angels in order to serve them. These angels, who were as many demons, initiated the human race into "numerous errors and *mageia* and *pharmakeia* and idolatry and spilling of blood and altars and temples and libations for all the demons of the earth." Thus, with the assistance of Fate, they trapped man in a permanent state of ignorance and error.[84] Athanasius and the Gnostic sources agree in that they consider *mageia* and related practices simultaneously as a result of enslavement to the demons and as a means of perpetuating this enslavement.

Hagiography shares their demonological perspective, sometimes adding a touch of its own. A well-known story about Saint Macarius the Egyptian relates

81 See, in addition to the literature cited in n. 58 above, G. Bartelink, "Βάσκανος désignation de Satan et des démons chez les auteurs chrétiens", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 49 (1983): 390–406 (about *baskanos*); L.T. Johnson, "James 3:13–4:10 and the topos περὶ φθόνου," *Novum Testamentum* 25 (1983): 327–47 (about *phthonos*).

82 See M. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques: Adam, Éros et les animaux d'Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi (II, 5)* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1974), 72, n. 157; F. Graf, "Mythical Production: Aspects of Myth and Technology in Antiquity," in *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought*, ed. R. Buxton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 318–322. See also above, Harari, Chapter 8.

83 *Pistis Sophia*, 25, 11–16, cf. 27, 4–10; 29, 10–17, ed. C. Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia*, Coptica 11 (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel-Nordisk Forlag, 1925); cf. ed. C. Schmidt and trans. V. MacDermot, *Pistis Sophia*, Nag Hammadi Studies 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).

84 *On the Origin of the World*, ch. 124, ed. and trans. B. Layton, *Nag hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, vol. 11, Nag Hammadi Studies 21 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), 82; Cf. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 71–72.

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how he had to unmask a much respected monk who preached the heretic doctrine of a certain Hierakas. Already from afar the saint was able to diagnose the case of the Hierakite monk:

> A ruling spirit (*archontikon*) is at work within that man. That you know that this is not a job for me, since I have never fought against such great spirits. For our fathers have taught us that there are two orders of demons. One of these orders pours forth lust into the bodies of men, another order pours forth error into the soul. These second ones, then, are difficult to conquer, but the first, of the body, are very easy to humiliate. Satan prepared these two orders and sent these two troops forth and he instructed them in order that the one whom they would lead astray would become heretic and that they would humiliate themselves for him in an illusionary way (*phantasia*) so as to ruin a multitude through this person. These orders then are the mates of the heresiarchs and the *acho* who are *magos*, in particular the perpetrators of *hik*, and the enchanters (*ašeben*)[85] and the cup-diviners (*šenhin*).[86]

According to a classification that is clearly of monastic inspiration, the demons that serve Satan are divided into two groups: one working on the body, the other on the soul of man. The latter group inspires both the heresiarchs, such as Hierakas, and the various classes of ritualists that are listed. Bringing in the latter, as the author does, is by no means demanded by the storyline and must be considered an explicit warning to his audience.

The sources quoted so far, situate *hik* or *mageia* in a context of enslavement to the demons, to which redemption in Christ serves as a counterpoint. Christ's victory over death and devil signaled the defeat of *mageia* as well. In early Christian literature this point of view had already found its expression in Ignatius of Antioch's *Letter to the Ephesians* (early second century). In a passage that plausibly alludes to the star of Bethlehem observed by the *magoi* (Matt. 2:1–12), God incarnate is revealed to "the eons" as a dazzling new star. Its novelty and otherness cause disturbance among these eons and, eventually, lead to the destruction of all *mageia* and the abolition of "every bond (*desmos*)

85 A word corresponding to Sahidic *refmoute*; it is probably an Aramaic loanword; cf. W. Vycichl, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue copte* (Leuven: Peeters, 1983), 20.

86 Here quoted after the Bohairic in Chaîne, "La double recension," 247–48; the Greek, in E. Preuschen, *Palladius und Rufinus. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde des ältesten Mönchtums*. (Giessen: J. Rickersche Buchhandlung, 1897), 124–30, mentions only *goetai*, heresiarchs and *pharmakoi*. *Šenhin* corresponds to Greek *mantis*; both *ašeben* and *šenhin* are rare biblical words.

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of evil."[87] The same argument can be found in Egyptian sources, for example in Origen,[88] or in a second-century Christian Gnostic source, quoted by Clement of Alexandria in his *Excerpta ex Theodoto*.[89] For this reason, Christians who stick to a pious life and to continuous prayer "are not caught either by *mageia* or by demons."[90] Likewise, Athanasius of Alexandria, in his *Life of Antony*, makes Antony observe that "wherever the sign of the cross is made, *mageia* becomes weak and *pharmakeia* does not work."[91] Also the *Questions of Cyril* imply that the power of sorcery is limited by the cross: "they (scil. the *magoi*) do not dare to show themselves wherever the sign of the cross is."[92] On the other hand, their practices may seem to work if the *magoi* of the *Questions of Cyril* or the various classes of ritualist enumerated in the Macarius story choose to ally with the devil or his demons.

Also more technical arguments were invoked in order to explain how it was possible that ritual practices, although considered unwholesome in themselves, could yet appear to work. The best known treatment of this question is by Origen in his *Contra Celsum*.[93] Origen naturally condemns "the deceitful art of astrology (*genethlialogia*)" as well as *mageia*, which serves "to the destruction and ruin of those who use it."[94] In his response to Celsus, moreover, he is careful to distinguish between the acts of *mageia* and the miracles

87 Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians*, ed. and trans. P. Th. Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Polycarpe de Smyrne, Lettres, Martyre de Polycarpe*, Sources chrétiennes 10 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1969), 19, 2–3. Cf. W.R. Schoedel, *A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 87–94.

88 Origen, *Contra Celsum* I, 59–60.

89 Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, 69–75, ed. and trans. F. Sagnard, *Clément d'Alexandrie, Extraits de Théodote*, Sources chrétiennes 23 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970).

90 Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI, 41.

91 Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, ed. and trans. G.J.M. Bartelink, *Athanase d'Alexandrie, Vie d'Antoine*, Sources chrétiennes 400 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1994), 87, 5. Similarly, Athanasius, *De incarnatione*, 48; cf. the possibly Athanasian fragment, *On Amulets* (cited above, note 17).

92 *The Questions of Cyril*, 7.

93 See in particular G. Bardy, "Origène et la magie," *Recherches de science religieuse* 18 (1928): 126–142; J. Dillon, "The Magical Power of Names in Origen and Later Platonism," in *Origeniana tertia*, ed. R. Hanson and H. Crouzel (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985), 203–216; G. Sfameni Gasparro, "Origene e la magia: teoria e prassi," in *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Conference, Pisa 27–31 August 2001*, ed. L. Peronne et al., Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 164 (Leuven: Leuven University Press & Peeters, 2003): 733–756; and more recently R. Roukema, "Early Christianity and Magic," *ASE* 24/2 (2007): 374–378, who at 376 refers to similar views in Clement of Alexandria and Iamblichus.

94 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VI, 80.

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wrought by Jesus in the Gospels.[95] Yet, he appears to be convinced that certain stars can announce important good or evil events, quoting the Egyptian sage Chaeremon to this effect,[96] and that certain spells are able to create certain effects. To explain this latter phenomenon, he very carefully expounds his well-known theory about the power of names:

> Now if by a special study we could show the nature of powerful names, some of which are used by the Egyptian wise men, or the learned men among the Persian magi (…), and if we could establish that so-called *mageia* is not, as the followers of Epicurus and Aristotle think, utterly incoherent, but (…) a consistent system, which has principles known to very few; then we would say that the name Sabaoth, and Adonai, and all the other names that have been handed down by the Hebrews with great reverence, are not concerned with ordinary created things, but with a certain mysterious divine science that is related to the creator of the universe. It is for this reason that when these names are pronounced in a particular sequence which is natural to them, they can be employed for certain purposes; and so also with other names in use in the Egyptian language which invoke certain demons who have power only to do certain particular things.[97]

His theory of magic hinges on what he calls "a philosophy of names" that supposes an intimate relationship between *signifiant* and *signifié*, as defended by the Stoics.[98] Because they are more powerful than others, names and invocations from the Hebrew Bible could be used successfully not only by Hebrews, but "by almost all who deal in incantations (*epoidai*) and practices of *mageia*."[99] It does not matter so much who use them, their inherent power becomes apparent as long as they are pronounced correctly. Therefore, also the name of Jesus, "has already been clearly seen to have expelled countless demons from souls and bodies."[100]

A similar ambivalent attitude that concedes technical possibilities for *mageia* and astrology to be operative even after the intervention of Christ is

95 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 68.
96 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 59; Chaeremon, *Fragments*, no. 3, ed. and trans. P.W. van der Horst, *Chaeremon: Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher. The Fragments Collected and Translated with Explanatory Notes*, EPRO 101 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 12–13.
97 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 24.
98 On theories of the efficacy of names in antiquity see below, Janowitz, Chapter 25.
99 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, IV, 33–34.
100 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 25.

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found in the first book of the Gnostic *Pistis Sophia*.[101] The unknown Egyptian author, who may have been writing around 330, condemns the occult sciences from a double ethical perspective. They imply association with demonic powers, the archons that rule over the lower eons, and are at the same time seen as evil in their intent. Yet the author is also clearly aware of what *mageia* and the casting of horoscopes are about technically. *Mageia* consists of "mysteries" that derive their effectiveness, as with Origen, from properly addressed and formulated "invocations" of supernatural beings. Astrological predictions are based upon the observation of conventional geometrical relationships between the heavenly bodies, which allows the computation of their effects. The author profusely uses technical jargon and apparently considers astrology a real science.

In a bizarre myth, the author relates how the risen Jesus travelled upwards through the two lowermost spheres of heaven, that of the planets and that of the fixed stars, which is also called Fate, and the twelve hostile eons that are above these. In a violent confrontation, he took away one third of the power of the archons of the twelve eons, and subsequently reversed the course of the celestial spheres over which they rule so that during one half of the year they move in an opposite direction than their wont. The purported aim of both actions is explained carefully. First, by taking away a third part of the archons' power, Jesus targets human practitioners, "so that when the humans in the world invoke them (scil. the archons) (…) in their evil practices, they will not be able to execute them."[102] Second, by reversing the course of the first sphere and the sphere of Fate, Jesus aimed at the arts of the horoscopers (*refkaounou*) and diviners (*refšine*), "so that from that moment onwards, they do not know to inform them (scil. their clients) about anything that will happen"[103] The horoscopers get confused in their computations and, the diviners, who are treated here as a related though different class of experts, when they invoke (*epikaleo*) the names of the archons will not be heard by them, since they are oriented in a way that differs from their original arrangement.[104] Also the archons themselves become confused by the periodical change of direction, and do not know their own orbits anymore.[105]

101 For what follows, see J. van der Vliet, "Fate, Magic and Astrology in Pistis Sophia, Chaps 15–21," in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuizen*, ed. A. Hilhorst and G.H. van Kooten, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 59 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2005), 519–36.

102 *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Schmidt, 25, 11–16; cf. 27, 4–10; 29, 10–17.

103 *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Schmidt, 27, 13–14.

104 *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Schmidt, 31, 3–7.

105 *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Schmidt, 31, 26–32, 4.

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This may seem a slightly eccentric but generally clear account of how Jesus disarmed *mageia*, divination, and astrology. Subsequently, however, various concessions are made. Thus, the practitioners may appeal to "the mysteries of the *mageia* of the thirteenth eon," and when they invoke the powers of this superior eon, which has been left unharmed by Jesus, they will still be able to perform "their mysteries" in a flawless way.[106] Also the impotence of the astrologists and the diviners proves to be only relative and virtually limited to certain periods. Worse, a clever astrologist may even be able to overcome entirely the problems posed by Jesus' intervention, for if he "can find their computation (scil. of the astral configurations) from the moment that I reversed them (scil. the courses of both spheres) (…), he will discover their influences precisely and can predict everything they will effectuate."[107] Astonishingly, therefore, Jesus' intervention had only limited effects. It appears that, for all his negative feelings about the occult sciences, the author of *Pistis Sophia* was yet convinced that they somehow still worked. It was probably his empirical belief in these sciences that made him explain their continuing efficacy in a complicated myth opposing the risen Jesus to the evil rulers of the eons, that is, in a form that strikes us as particularly arbitrary and unscholarly.

The technical understanding of *mageia* and fortune-telling as found in Origen's *Contra Celsum* and in the *Pistis Sophia* raises the question whether Christian healings and miracles do not work along the same lines. Origen, who had to defend the Christians against Celsus' accusations of *mageia*, makes a twofold distinction, technical and ethical. Ethically, Origen claims that Christian exorcists aim at moral edification and not at showing off by trickery.[108] Technically, he claims that successful Christian exorcists "make no use of incantations (*epoidai*), but only of the name of Jesus and other words that are vouchsafed by divine scripture."[109] It is foremost the name of Jesus and similar holy names that give them power over the demons. Also other Egyptian authors are careful to maintain these distinctions. In Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, the healings of the Saint are technically differentiated from "art" (*techne*) and *mageia* in that the former heals by invoking the name of Christ only and by making the sign of the cross[110] and does not work by "giving orders," but through prayer and "by pronouncing the name of Christ."[111] The saint's

106 *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Schmidt, 29, 21–30, 2.
107 *Pistis Sophia*, ed. Schmidt, 30, 19–25.
108 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 69.
109 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 6.
110 Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 80, 4.
111 Athanasius, *Life of Antony*, 84, 1.

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ritual is efficacious because its invocations focus on the sole name of Christ and because of his ethically correct attitude (prayer as opposed to command).

8 Saints and Frauds

The *magos* as a negative literary hero, as a 'bad guy' fighting the 'good guys', is as old as biblical literature itself. It has its roots in the stories from Exodus that oppose Moses and Aaron to the *pharmakoi* and enchanters (*epaoidoi*) of Pharaoh (Ex. 7:11, LXX), to whom later tradition would give the names Jannes and Jambres.[112] The New Testament figure of the Samaritan *magos* Simon (Acts 8:9–24) gave likewise rise to much subsequent embroidery, for example in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles.[113] Within Egyptian hagiography, the bad guy-good guy conflict is notably represented by two literary motifs, that of 'the *magos* converted to saint', best exemplified by Cyprian and Astratole, and that of the contest between martyr and *magos* in the Coptic Acts of the Martyrs. Although this kind of literature scores low for realism, it is of capital interest for understanding the ways by which the figure of the *magos* entered the Christian imagination.[114]

The entirely fictitious figure of Cyprian, an ancient Dr. Faust, belongs to the most influential literary figures of late antiquity, confused with the historical bishop and martyr Cyprian of Carthage (died 258) at an early stage.[115] His legend, which knew a long and complicated tradition from the fourth century onwards, was popular all over the ancient world, also in Egypt, where it in turn

112 See A. Pietersma, *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians*, RGRW 119 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994).

113 See J.N. Bremmer, "Aspects of the Acts of Peter: Women, Magic, Place and Date," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles and Gnosticism*, ed. J.N. Bremmer, Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 9–14, about the *Acts of Peter*, and the essays by G.P. Luttikhuizen and T. Adamik in the same volume. See also above, Sanzo, Chapter 10.

114 See, for instance, C.E. ten Hacken, "The Legend of Saint Aūr and the Monastery of Naqlūn: The Copto-Arabic Texts" (PhD dissertation, Leiden Institute for Area Studies, Leiden University, 2015) (medieval Egypt), S. Vlavianos, *La figure du mage à Byzance. De Jean Damascène à Michel Psellos, VIIIe–fin XIe siècle*, Dossiers byzantins 13 (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, 2013) (Byzantium).

115 For what follows, the most complete Sahidic Coptic version of Pseudo-Cyprian's *Confession* is used; for the complicated Greek tradition and general bibliography, see L. Krestan and A. Hermann, "Cyprianus II (Magier)," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957), 467–77; cf. A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. I: L'astrologie et les sciences occultes, 2nd ed. (Paris: Gabalda, 1950), 369–73.

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inspired new compositions.[116] The so-called *Confession of Cyprian* describes in considerable detail the training of a pagan scholar who afterwards settled as a professional ritualist in Antioch.[117] There he met the limits of his science and converted to Christianity to become eventually bishop of Antioch. His subsequent martyrdom under Diocletian is described in a separate composition. Part of the opening passage of Cyprian's *Confession* in its Sahidic Coptic version may be cited here to give an impression of the genre:

> I am Cyprian, who was dedicated to the temple of Apollo in his childhood, where I was taught the works of deception that are done by the Dragon when I was still young. Indeed, before I had fully reached the age of seven years, I had advanced to the mystery of Mithras. Although I was a foreigner to the Athenians, and not by origin a native of the town, the zeal of my parents had made me a citizen at that place. When I had become fifteen years old, I served Demeter and went in procession before her with torches, and her daughter who is called Virgin I mourned in shining garments.[118]

He subsequently moved to Olympus where he got acquainted with various classes of demons. In Argos, he celebrated the festival of Hera and learned "how to divorce women from their husbands and how hate is fomented between brothers and friends."[119] In Elis he was instructed particularly in astrology, and among the Thracians, in various techniques of divination. As a real wandering student, he then continued his studies in Egypt, in particular Memphis and Heliopolis, in order to become "wiser than Jannes and Jambres."[120] In Egypt, he was initiated in the world of both the subterranean and the aerial demons, and their more or less monstrous appearances and activities. His descriptions of "dragons consorting with demons and the bitterness of the poison that dripped from their mouth to kill the inhabitants of the earth", and similar, must have given late-antique audiences a real thrill comparable to that of modern fantasy

116 Most notably the erotic spell translated by H.M. Jackson, in *ACM*, no. 73, and the fragmentary *Homily on Neglecting Sunday Mass* (Depuydt, *Catalogue*, no. 63), both presently known in Coptic only. An Arabic *Prayer of Cyprian* was quoted above (section 6).

117 See the résumé in Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 37–40.

118 Pseudo-Cyprian of Antioch, *Confession*, 66, ed. and trans. Bilabel and Grohmann, *Griechische, koptische und arabische Texte*, 43–230; partial trans. M. Malinine, in A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 374–383.

119 Pseudo-Cyprian of Antioch, *Confession*, 68.

120 Pseudo-Cyprian of Antioch, *Confession*, 71. For the Egyptian reminiscences in this part of the *Confession*, see L. Kákosy, "'Cyprien' en Égypte," in *Mélanges Adolphe Gutbub* (Montpellier: Université de Montpellier, 1984), 109–114.

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films. At age thirty, he left Egypt for the land of the Chaldeans to be instructed, among other things, in astrology and the then popular science of astrobotany.[121] Finally, at the end of this impressive curriculum, he tells how he is hailed by the devil himself as a "new Jambres". There is no real written pact with the devil, but the devil kisses Cyprian on the mouth and receives him among the grandees of his demonic court.[122]

As a master in the black arts, he established himself in Antioch, apparently as a specialist in the erotic domain. There, he says, "I performed marvelous works through the art (*techne*) of *magia* and I dispensed on many the *pharmagia* of erotic desire, and the energy that counters envy (*phthonos*) and jealousy."[123] One of his clients, a young lawyer Aglaïtos (or, Aglaïdas), asks him to gain for him the favors of a girl, Justina, a pious virgin, who had devoted her life to Christ. None of his efforts to gain her love are successful, however. One of the most amusing episodes is undoubtedly when Cyprian transforms Aglaïtos into a sparrow. He flies to the gable top of Justina's house, but when she looks up the spell is broken; Aglaïtos falls down and nearly dies. All Cyprian's tricks to conquer the heart of Justina are annulled by the purity of her prayer and her piety, and he starts to realize the weakness of the devil. In the course of a violent altercation with the devil, who attacks him, he invokes "the God of Justina" and is saved. He converts and publicly confesses his sins, a long list of gruesome deeds, including divorce, abortion, wars and human sacrifice. He is baptized, becomes a deacon who specializes in healing and exorcism, but now in the name of Christ. In the end, he and Justina suffer martyrdom together under Diocletian.

The *Confession of Cyprian* is certainly not a realistic portrait of an ancient *magos* nor even a 'pagan holy man'. Yet it does give an idea how, from a strongly biased Christian point of view, such a figure could be constructed in late antiquity. Learned and well versed in the pagan lore of various traditions, Greek, Egyptian, Chaldean, his actual practice appears to be focused on the erotic, precisely the domain where he decisively fails. Otherwise the crimes to which he admits include a whole series of horrors that were habitually attributed to 'others' in a polemic context, such as the sacrifice of children, etc.[124] The lesson that pervades the entire *Confession* is clear: practices such as *mageia*,

121 'Botanique astrologique', see the classic discussion in Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 137–86.

122 Pseudo-Cyprian of Antioch, *Confession*, 81.

123 Pseudo-Cyprian of Antioch, *Confession*, 86.

124 On this latter motif, which otherwise does not play a prominent role in our sources, see R. Lanzillotta, "The Early Christians and Human Sacrifice," in *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice*, ed. J.N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters: 2007), 81–102 and, more general,

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divination and astrology have a background in paganism and amount to serving the devil and the demons. The positive mirror-image is provided by the figure of Justina, who embodies the power of prayer, but also by Cyprian himself, who after his conversion becomes, as a deacon, an expert in healing and exorcism.

The theme of the converted magician who subsequently sacrificed his life as a martyr was not uncommon in late antiquity. An interesting Egyptian example is the story of Astratole that was reproduced in several Coptic martyrs legends, and probably also in his own Acts, which do not survive completely, however. The brief story is nearly identical in both complete Sahidic versions.[125] While in prison, the martyr (in the version quoted here, Shenoufe) has been healing the sick and is now accused by the pagan governor of plying *mageia*. The martyr denies and illustrates the impotence of pagan invocations (the originally Greek verb *epikaleo* is used), as opposed to the power of the name Jesus, by telling the story of Astratole:

> For I heard about a great *magos* called Astratole, who was a high priest from Shmoun (Hermopolis), and did mighty works through his practice as a *magos*. He desired to go down in the pit of the abyss to investigate it and discover how it was like. He made invocation (*epikaleô*) through his arts of *mageia* and the pit of the abyss opened up. He went down and the pit closed as it had been. The demons surrounded him and some of them said: 'Let's behead him!', and others: 'Let's flay him alive!', and yet others: 'Let's tear out his nails!'—briefly, they were planning to subject him to horrible tortures. He exhausted himself by invoking (*epikaleô*) all the powers under heaven, and they were unable to deliver him. Then he remembered Jesus, the son of the living God and the God of all Christians, and his heart found courage. And he said by himself: 'When I only remember to myself Jesus Christ, the God of the Christians, and find such great strength, then how much more, when I pronounce his name by mouth—what will happen to me?' And straightaway Astratole cried out loudly: 'Jesus Christ, God of the Christians, when you deliver me from this great distress, I will go and shed my blood for your holy name!' And

D. Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 73–128.

125 *Martyrdom of Apa Epima*, 18–19, ed. and trans. T. Mina, *Le martyre d'apa Epima* (Cairo: Service des antiquités de l'Egypte, 1937) ; *Martyrdom of Saint Shenoufe*, 102–3, ed. and trans. E.A.E. Reymond and J.W.B. Barns, *Four Martyrdoms from the Pierpont Morgan Coptic Codices* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 81–127, 185–222; cf. Th. Baumeister, *Martyr invictus*, Forschungen zur Volkskunde 46 (Münster: Verlag Regensberg, 1972), 111.

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> right away the pit opened up for him and he came up, went and became a martyr in order that you, lawless governor, know that this name of Jesus has nothing to do with the power of any *magos*!

The governor, of course, is not convinced and Shenoufe is sentenced according to "the laws of the emperors" against "*pharmakoi* and temple robbers" and thrown into the stoke-hole of the bathhouse.[126]

The most interesting feature of the Astrotole-story is undoubtedly his descent into the underworld. As a master proof of supernatural prowess, the ability to go down alive into the underworld has a venerable history in traditional Egyptian literature.[127] Also, the Astratole-story presents it as the most impressive feat a *magos* could perform.

The accusation of being a *magos* is a standard ingredient of the judgement scenes in the Egyptian Acts of the Martyrs.[128] In many of them, it gives rise to a confrontation between the martyr and a pagan *magos* in the form of a contest, a stock theme that has antecedents in both biblical and early-Christian sources and indigenous literature.[129] The *magos* is asked to outdo the powers of the martyr and his vain efforts to do so give rise to various burlesque developments, in the end of which the *magos* either dies from his own tricks or converts to Christianity.[130] A few examples may suffice.

In the Bohairic *Martyrdom of Saint George*, the emperor sends out a letter to the entire world inviting an *acho* or a *magos* strong enough to undo the powers of Saint George. A certain Athanasius appears and first demonstrates his abilities by splitting a bull into two halves that appear to be of exactly equal weight.

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126 *Martyrdom of Saint Shenoufe*, 102–103.

127 See *P. Vandier*, ed. and trans. G. Posener, *Le Papyrus Vandier*, Bibliothèque générale 7 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1985); compare the later traditions about Rhampsinitus (Herodotus, *Hist*. II, 122) and Setne Khamwas (Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 138–142). See also A. von Lieven, "Wissen, was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält oder Faust in Agypten?" JANER 2 (2002): 75–89 and, less convincingly, J. Serrano Delgado, "Rhampsinitus, Setne Khamwas and the Descent to the Netherworld: Some Remarks on Herodotus II, 122, 1," *JANER* 11, (2011): 94–108.

128 Cf. Ritner, *Mechanics*, 236–37, n. 1093.

129 Biblical and apocryphal: Moses and the sorcerers of Pharaoh, Saint Peter and Simon (referred to above); indigenous literature: *Setne* II, about Si-Osire and the Nubian sorcerer (Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 142–51).

130 See J. Zandee, "Het patroon der martyria [The pattern of martyrdoms]," *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift* 14 (1959–1960): 14–15; Baumeister, *Martyr invictus*, 113, 131–32, 145, 148; cf. E.D. Zakrzewska, "The Bohairic Martyrs Acts as a Narrative Genre," in *Actes du huitième congrès international d'études coptes, Paris, 28 juin–3 juillet 2004*, ed. N. Bosson and A. Boud'hors, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 136: (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007), vol. 2, 792–95.

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Then he is allowed to confront Saint George. Athanasius takes a cup, washes his face in it and invokes "names of demons" over the cup. The saint drinks it, but instead of dropping dead on the spot remains entirely unharmed. After a second trial, the defeated magician acknowledges the superiority of Christ and asks to be baptized.[131]

In the story, the magician "washed his face" in the cup. This recalls the use of *strigmenta* as actually attested in Coptic ritual texts and by the Pseudo-Athanasian sermon quoted above. In other martyrdoms, clearly no realism at all is attempted and the *magos* is mixing a brew of, for instance, "arrow poison, serpent poison, liver, gall, scurf (?), and pus from a corpse"[132] or other more or less filthy or fantastic ingredients. In the Sahidic *Martyrdom of Saint Victor the General*, the drink gave the saint the pleasant experience of being drunk from wine.[133] In that of *Saint Macarius of Antioch* the *magos*—full of unbelief—takes the cup from the unharmed saint, drinks himself and is blown to pieces on the spot.[134] These are mere variations on a well-known pattern that was primarily meant to make the author's audience alternately shiver with horror and roar with laughter. Both in the legends about converted *magoi* and in the Acts of the Martyrs, the *magos* is an anti-hero whose tragicomic activities serve as a counterpoint to either his own conversion and subsequently acquired holiness or the superior supernatural power of a holy martyr.

8 Conclusions

Given the point of departure of this chapter, which set out to study constructions of deviant and illegitimate ritual, it cannot come as a surprise that none of the sources discussed here consider *mageia* / *hik* or the like to be something recommendable. This even holds for Origen and the anonymous author of the *Pistis Sophia*, who are caught in a precarious balancing act between on the one hand rejection, imposed by dominant religious and philosophical discourse, and on the other hand a form of acceptance, based on the perceived

131 *Martyrdom of Saint George*, 276–278, ed. I. Balestri and H. Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 86 (Paris: Poussielgue, 1924), 270–311 (and later reprints).

132 *Martyrdom of Saint Macarius of Antioch*, 60, ed. and trans. H. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte* (Paris: Leroux, 1886), 40–77.

133 *Martyrdom of Saint Victor the General,* 38, ed. and trans. E.A.W. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms etc. in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1914), 1–45; 253–98.

134 *Martyrdom of Saint Macarius of Antioch*, 61.

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empirical efficacy of certain ritual techniques. Basically, *mageia, pharmakeia, goeteia* or whatever term is used, refer to practices that defy a given norm. By the same token, the texts quoted above are hardly ever about these practices or their practitioners themselves, but rather about constructing a holy and superior we-group and bolstering the case of correct philosophy, proper religious behavior and orthodoxy.

Likewise, given that this chapter intended to cover a wide spectrum of textual sources, it does not come as a surprise that it exhibits a variety of possible discourses that are often revealing more about authors and their intentions and genre conventions than about the phenomena they pretend to describe or decry. None of these sources can be accepted at face value as a description of what went on in actual society. This does not make them worthless, however. Constructions of deviant ritual can be seen to become socially operative in particular in the first three categories of sources discussed above: in the accusations brought forward against 'others', either groups or individuals; in the normative literature, either canonical or homiletic, that addresses the own in-group and defines which ritual practices are backed by ecclesiastical authority and which not, and, finally, the ritual and hagiographical literature that gives an inkling of the dangers feared from deviant ritual. The latter category shows that health, business, but in particular the domain of sex and the family were seen as vulnerable to hostile influences. For future research, it would be worthwhile to delve further into Christian normative literature, in particular late-antique canonical texts, and the ritual texts themselves, considered as witnesses to social practices.

Finally, the last group of sources discussed above, hagiographical texts about weird counter-heroes, may seem to be the least interesting, verging on the caricature. Yet it is precisely this kind of literature that decisively shaped the image of the *magos* in the western tradition, an image that till today weighs upon the academic study of 'magic' world-wide. Simultaneously, it brings out a basic characteristic of all of the Christian sources that have been discussed. On all levels of Christian discourse, deviant ritual is associated with the powers of evil, whether with demons, the devil himself or fallen archons, or the "wicked and meddlesome people" who choose to associate with these powers. Christian constructions of *mageia* and the like have a strong demonological and, by the same token, theological and cosmological underpinning. This metaphysical aspect may be felt as an irritating bias by modern scholars, but was most likely 'core business' for our Egyptian authors and their audiences.

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9 Suggested Readings

Frankfurter, David, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 480–500.

Frankfurter, David, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Graf, Fritz, "Untimely Death, Witchcraft, and Divine Vengeance: A Reasoned Epigraphic Catalogue," *ZPE* 167 (2007): 139–50.

Meyer, Marvin, ed. and trans., *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels* (*P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685*)*: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrussammlung N.F. 9 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1996).

Meyer, Marvin and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994. Reprint, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Ritner, Robert K., *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993).

Roukema, Riemer, "Early Christianity and Magic," *ASE* 24/2 (2007): 367–378.

Van der Vliet, Jacques, "Fate, Magic and Astrology in Pistis Sophia, Chaps 15–21," in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Jewish, Early Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuizen*, ed. A. Hilhorst and G.H. van Kooten, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 59 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2005), 519–36.

Van der Vliet, Jacques, "'In a Robe of Gold:' Status, Magic and Politics on Inscribed Christian Textiles from Egypt," in *Textile Messages: Inscribed Fabrics from Roman to Abbasid Egypt*, ed. C. Fluck, G. Helmecke. Studies in Textile and Costume History 4 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2006), 23–67.

Van der Vliet, Jacques, "Spätantikes Heidentum in Ägypten im Spiegel der koptischen Literatur," in *Begegnung von Heidentum und Christentum im spätantiken Ägypten*, Riggisberger Berichte 1 (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 1993), 99–130.

Van der Vliet, Jacques, "Varia magica coptica," *Aegyptus* 71 (1991): 217–42.

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PART 3

The Materials of Ancient Magic

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CHAPTER 12

Introduction

David Frankfurter

What is the primary evidence for "magic"? Are there any particular kinds of texts or artifacts that justify or illustrate this category—by reference to which one might talk confidently about "magic"? And what connotations of "magic" correspond to which sorts of materials? Do ancient *grimoires* suggest a "magical worldview," while amulets and *apotropaia* point to base superstition? These have certainly been the assumptions surrounding the materials in this section. How, then, can these materials be understood on their own terms, without recourse to assumptions about magic?

The essays in this section cover textual and archaeological materials that have been labelled magic according to long scholarly tradition. One might even say that these materials have substantiated a category magic, such that the impression of magic in a biblical or hagiographical text might be demonstrated or disputed through parallels with magical texts. And yet none of these materials present themselves as *mageia* or *khesheph*—as illegitimate ritual forms—nor as belonging to some intrinsically subversive or esoteric realm of religious practice. They have no self-consciousness as "other"; they are only texts and artifacts that *scholars* have cast as magic.[1] It is thus the contribution of this section of the *Guide* to consider these materials on their own terms—to fit them more accurately into their historical, religious, literary, and artisanal contexts.

A significant shift has taken place in academic perspective on both the magical texts themselves and on the range of things we consider artifacts of magic. When magic was regarded (as per Frazer) as a belief-system, it was natural for scholars to turn to written sources that seemed to reflect a "magical worldview"—or perhaps that promiscuous mishmash of religions' detritus that (for some historians and classicists) fairly characterized the cultural decadence that

1 Although see below, Van der Vliet, Chapter 14, who builds on a proposal for textual 'otherness' by Sebastian Richter: T.S. Richter, "Markedness and unmarkedness in Coptic magical writing," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité. Actes du colloque international* (*Liège, 13–15 octobre 2011*), ed. M. de Haro Sanchez, Papyrologica Leodiensia 5 (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2015), 97–108.

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was magic.[2] In this way the so-called Greek Magical Papyri, for example, came to function as documents of primitive thinking or decadent intellectual currents, invaluable for juxtaposing to biblical rationalism, apostolic Christianity, rabbinic Judaism, classical philosophy, and higher-minded late antique movements like Hermeticism.[3]

But as the general conceptualization of magic shifted in the late twentieth century from an intellectual to a practical or ritual phenomenon, two adjustments came to take place in scholarship. First, the texts themselves have come to be discussed more as manuals for ritual practices, ritual language, and ritual symbolism than as evidence for a coherent cultural undercurrent in the ancient world. Second, the evidence that texts offer for ritual practices—whether these practices were normative or subversive, priestly or domestic, esoteric or public—has come to be supplemented, even replaced, by artifacts like amulets, bowls, architectural elements, and provenanced assemblages. This is not to say that these latter materials were ignored in prior decades. Rich and essential publications of amulets and gems by (e.g.) Campbell Bonner, Armand Delatte and Philippe Derchain, and Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked have long been consulted by more broad-thinking historians of religion.[4] The historian of early Judaism Erwin Goodenough notably sought to bring both textual and archaeological materials together to give a synthetic picture of ancient Jewish religion.[5] But beyond Goodenough, with magic widely imagined as an intrinsically subversive realm outside religion proper, scholars had

2 E.g., A.A. Barb, "The Survival of the Magic Arts," in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century: Essays*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 100–125; A.A. Barb, "Mystery, Myth, and Magic," in *The Legacy of Egypt*, ed. J.R. Harris (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 138–69; Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006). Compare perspectives of Arthur Darby Nock, "Greek Magical Papyri [1929]," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Zeph Stewart, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 176–94; John G. Gager, "A New Translation of Ancient Greek and Demotic Papyri, Sometimes Called Magical," *Journal of Religion* 67, no. 1 (1987): 80–86.

3 See remarks of Jonathan Z. Smith, "Great Scott! Thought and Action One More Time," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 73–91.

4 Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950); Armand Delatte and Philippe Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1964); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993).

5 Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon, 1953), vol. 2.

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little sense of how to use non-textual materials except as repositories of verbal parallels to anomalies in classical or biblical literature or as simple illustrations of what the documents—the manuals—described.

The combination of textual and archaeological materials covered in this section can now steer readers to historical and archaeological questions about the nature of these artifacts on their own terms—not as "documents of magic." What sort of person composed this collection, or inscribed this gem, and why? What fears or social crisis precipitated the commission of that horrifying image or this inscribed bowl? Where were these materials produced, assembled, deposited? How were the governing traditions shared and transmitted? Even more broadly, the materials in this section should stimulate questions about what magic itself could be—what exactly the term could describe. They might also bring the reader back to the historical issues raised in Part 2: can any of these materials *substantiate*, materially, prevailing cultural assumptions about ambiguous or unsanctioned ritual?

But what does it mean to consider a manual of charms and incantations "on its own terms"? The authors here look at historical filiations with earlier manuals (why were they collected? How were they framed?), the characteristics of the literate subcultures and specialists responsible for their compilation, and the conceptions of the written and spoken word that undergird their contents. Many such manuals reflect rich multicultural and polyglot environments in which names, formulae, and symbols are shared and exchanged, even while (in some cases) the ancient editors might try to maintain the boundaries of a Judaism or a Christianity of some sort. They are also the compositions—and the resources—of people associated with *ritual expertise* in culture: as inscribers of charms, performers of ceremonies, healers and exorcists, cursers, diviners, and masters of the efficacious word. The reconstruction of these literate ritual specialists from the manuals and assemblages themselves has been among the most productive areas of research on these materials.[6]

6 See, e.g., Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); David Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician'," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg, Studies in the History of Religions 75 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 115–35; David Frankfurter, "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 2, no. 2 (2000): 162–94; Richard Gordon, "Shaping the Text: Innovation and Authority in Graeco-Egyptian Malign Magic," in *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H. S. Versnel*, ed. H.F.J. Horstmanshoff et al., RGRW 142 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 69–112; Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual, 100–300 CE*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005).

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For their part, amulets and gems, *defixiones*, figurines and domestic architectural features now emerge, not as subordinate byproducts of magical papyri, but as artifacts of craft, whether of skilled artisans or everyday folk.[7] Kotansky's wide-ranging essay here shows specifically the multiple craft traditions that aimed at materializing the written word in small, portable media. Such artifacts also become objects of manipulation and gesture, of spatial deposit, and foci of bodily senses. And they are vehicles of *agency* in the world: that is, they *work* on ailments and against demons, on desired lovers and nasty neighbors, evil eye and night-witches, and so on.

Finally, a number of essays address the curious overlaps in the function and conception of materials. (Oral) incantations are occasionally presented as material substances (and vice versa). Generic instructions ("… Insert the patient's name here") end up used as *phylaktēria*. Legal declarations (like the Jewish divorce *get*) are repurposed as apotropaic charms. Clever designs in a mosaic floor also offer protection against outsiders' envy. Formulae from church or synagogue liturgy are reimagined for private incantation. And a physical substance like lead—easy to inscribe and fold as a "letter"—impels a symbolic reference to its very characteristics ("coldness") in the wording of a curse-spell. These overlaps or dual functions of substances and words are not solely due to the general tendencies of ritual to transform and elide things; they also point to indigenous conceptions of things in the world: floors and walls, as Wilburn describes, or particular stones, as Nagy and Dasen point out, or the multivalence of the inscribed text—that it can shift from instruction to charm. It also points to the potentialities of speech forms: how legal language might be deemed effective enough to be used against a demon, or the verbal elements of Christian or Jewish liturgy might serve to invoke for oneself protective or vengeful angels.

In general, these "materials of magic" do not themselves make any claim to be magic and so cannot substantiate—historically or phenomenologically—a definable category magic for antiquity.[8] However, they stimulate our thinking about writing and the written word in ancient cultures, about ritual expertise and its various religious backgrounds, about substances and their agency in the world, and about the shifting ritual functions that things acquire in culture. To what degree we can call any of these topics magic must be deferred to Part 4.

7 See now the special issue of *Material Religion* 14, no. 2 (2018), "Cataloguing Magic."

8 Note that Bohak's approach to Jewish materials in Chapter 16 expresses a far more positive conception of magic as a distinct area of culture than this volume seeks to convey.

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CHAPTER 13

The Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri

Jacco Dieleman

1 Introduction

The dry sands of Egypt's deserts have preserved for us a large number of papyri dating to the late Ptolemaic and Roman periods, that are inscribed with ritual texts used for purely private, pragmatic ends. Ranging in date from about the first century BCE to the sixth century CE, they are testament to what once was a flourishing tradition of Greco-Egyptian private ritual along the Nile. Some are formularies with detailed instructions for ritual specialists on how to perform rituals; others are curses and amulets that ritual specialists produced, often relying on such formularies, for clients who felt the pressing need for supernatural assistance in resolving matters of health and interpersonal conflict. Most are written in koine Greek, but several are written primarily, or include significant sections, in Demotic Egyptian and Old-Coptic. One fragmentary manuscript preserves even a column of incantations in Formal Egyptian transcribed in Old-Coptic letters, and two recipes claim to give an incantation in Meroitic in Demotic transcription.

Today scholars refer to these papyri with the modern names of 'Greek Magical Papyri' (*PGM*) and 'Demotic Magical Papyri' (*PDM*)—or in combination, 'Greek and Demotic Magical Papyri.' These labels suggest that the manuscripts can be divided neatly by their primary language of inscription into two discrete corpora. This is, however, over-simplistic—if not outright mistaken and misleading. It is true that many manuscripts are written entirely in Greek, but there are no manuscripts that are inscribed exclusively in Demotic. All five manuscripts that contain recipes in Demotic include also recipes, or embed incantations, in Greek. Several other manuscripts contain sections in Old-Coptic next to, or as part of, Greek recipes. Moreover, most recipes and manuscripts are ostensibly the result of multiple inextricable stages of composition, compilation, redaction, and translation of source texts and copies in both Greek and Egyptian. The conventional *PGM*/*PDM* labels fail therefore to do justice to the multilingual and multicultural nature of the rituals as well as the manuscripts that preserve them. Instead, in this chapter, the manuscripts will be treated irrespective of their language of inscription as manifestations of Greco-Egyptian private ritual, a highly eclectic form of ritual and scribal

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practice that emerged first in the cosmopolitan cities of late Ptolemaic Egypt. Whoever composed, copied, and used these ritual texts, they coined a new verbal and visual idiom of ritual power by adapting freely from Egyptian, Greek, and Jewish rituals, texts, and authoritative traditions.

All manuscripts have been recovered in Egypt, where, thanks to the arid climate, materials written on papyrus, ostraca, and wooden tablets stand a better chance of survival than anywhere else in the former regions of the Roman Empire. Yet, similar materials circulated throughout the Roman Empire, as we know from ancient accounts as well as engraved gems and inscribed metal tablets that have been recovered in regions outside Egypt (some of which parallel texts in the papyri from Egypt). Therefore, with about 350 individual manuscripts, the Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri represent one of the most important sources for the study of private ritual in late Hellenistic and Roman times—in *and* outside Egypt. They preserve a perplexing variety of views and methods on how to mobilize assistance from the divine in everyday life.

2 Greco-Egyptian Private Ritual

'Greco-Egyptian private ritual' is used here as a generic term for a set of ritual practices from late Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt that aimed at acquiring assistance from deities, demons, and the dead for overcoming uncertainty, misfortune, illness, and conflict in everyday life.[1] Typologically, the practices range from protection and healing to cursing, divination, and divine visions. Rites were small in scale, required little expense, and were usually to be performed in a domestic space (or outdoors, out of view). Its associated material culture consists of papyri, silver and gold lamellae, gems of semi-precious stone, and lead tablets. Its primary language was always Koine Greek (interspersed occasionally with Egyptian terms), but in the course of the Roman period, it also found expression in local languages such as Demotic and Coptic (in Egypt) as well as Hebrew and Aramaic (in Egypt and Palestine). Mirroring the demographic realities of the cities and towns of late Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, the phenomenon was overtly and deliberately cosmopolitan and syncretistic in character, as is well illustrated by the range of deities, authoritative figures, and ritual procedures. Egyptian, Greek, and Jewish traditions were mixed and adapted. This multicultural mix was likely the result of increasing

1 For more details, see J. Dieleman, "Coping with a Difficult Life. Magic, Healing, and Sacred Knowledge," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, ed. Christina Riggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 337–61.

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competition, as the Ptolemaic period drew on, between ritual specialists for a clientele whose lives became culturally more diverse with every generation through intermarriage, careers in the Ptolemaic army and administration, and socio-cultural interactions. Ritual specialists who continued to work in their distinct Egyptian, Greek, or Jewish traditions were outsmarted by competitors who knew how to combine the three, by reinterpreting them for usage in a changed society and casting them into a more universal, Hellenized form. In the Roman period, when Greco-Egyptian private ritual started to flourish and mature, it found its way out of the Hellenized cities and towns into the Egyptian *chora*, and even out of Egypt into the Roman provinces.[2]

The rites worked on a verbal and visual idiom of ritual power, that was both novel and distinctive in the way it manipulates speech and writing.[3] These techniques are rooted in Greek phonemics and therefore, could be expressed properly only in Greek alphabetic writing—which demonstrates the primacy of Greek over Egyptian in the genesis of this type of private ritual. As for speech, it relied on an idiosyncratic and eclectic repertoire of artificial names of power, known collectively as *voces magicae* or *nomina barbara*, which, according to the practitioners, were the secret, authentic names of the deities and demons addressed. None have meaning in any human language, yet many derive etymologically from divine epithets and set phrases in Egyptian and Semitic. Garbled in Greek transcription, they were esteemed as a speech register that transcends human language. Most were used impromptu as individual units in ever-changing series, but some were combined into fixed name formulae, such as the MASKELLI-MASKELLŌ and SĒMEIA-KANTEU formulae. The seven Greek vowels were similarly treated as sounds of power, to be uttered or inscribed in various combinations (most often in the ascending series AEĒIOUŌ). Alphabetic writing was likewise exploited as a technology for capturing power, enabling scribes to make the ordered sequence of sounds visible and malleable. Palindromes such as ABLANATHANALBA were favored for *voces magicae*, while name formulae and vowel sequences were often written in geometric patterns (squares and wing shapes). An artificial script called *charaktēres* served as a set of mystical symbols that enable direct communication with the supernatural world, unadulterated through human speech and writing.

2 J.F. Quack, "Zauber ohne Grenzen. Zur Transkulturalität der spätantiken Magie," in *Rituale als Ausdruck von Kulturkontakt. 'Synkretismus' zwischen Negation und Neudefinition*, ed. Andreas Pries, Studies in Oriental Religions 67 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 177–99.

3 See below, Frankfurter, Chapter 23. Richard Gordon, "Shaping the Text: Innovation and Authority in Graeco-Egyptian Malign Magic," in *Kykeon. Studies in Honour of H.S. Versnel*, ed. H.F.J. Horstmanshoff, RGRW 142 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 69–111.

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These techniques are obviously inventions of a scribal mindset. Whoever devised them privileged the written over the oral and found symbolic meaning in the basic principles of alphabetic writing.[4] The scribal nature of Greco-Egyptian private ritual is further apparent in its reliance on *Vorlagen* and translations, both real and imagined. The formularies include comments on alternative ingredients and procedures as found in older copies, while recipes are often framed as translations of ancient hieroglyphic texts found inscribed on statues and temple walls, or as transmitted from celebrated authors of the past. Moreover, it was always an act of writing that ultimately charged gems, lamellae, and curse tablets with ritual power. Accordingly, the formularies are preoccupied with scribal tools and technologies. They prescribe a wide range of writing surfaces (from papyrus to metal, eggs, and bat's wings) and various inks (from carbon-based ink to myrrh, honey, gold rust, and blood).[5] Greco-Egyptian private ritual was clearly the product of a scribal class.

3 The Manuscripts

3.1 *Modern Corpora*

The numerous manuscripts that constitute the *Greco-Egyptian Magical Papyri* are today conveniently accessible in three modern text corpora: the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (*PGM*), the *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (*GMPT*—including the Demotic spells), and the *Supplementum Magicum* (*Suppl. Mag.*).[6] Each has its uses and limitations, which are best appreciated in light of the history of scholarship.[7]

4 Cf. Fritz Graf, "Magie et écriture: quelques réflexions, and Michaël Martin, Parler la langue des oiseaux: les écritures barbares et mystérieuses des tablettes de défixion," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*, ed. Magali De Haro Sanchez, Papyrologica Leodiensia 5 (Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2015).

5 Kirsten Dzwiza, *Schriftverwendung in antiker Ritualpraxis anhand der griechischen, demotischen und koptischen Praxisanleitungen des 1.–7. Jahrhunderts* (PhD diss., Erfurt-Heidelberg University, 2013).

6 French translations: M. Martin, *Les papyrus grecs magiques* (Paris: Le Manuscrit, 2002). Spanish translations: J.L. Calvo Martínez and D. Sánchez Romero, *Textos de Magia en Papiros Griegos* (Madrid: Gredos, 1987). Recent German translations (selections): J.F. Quack and A. Jördens, in: *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments. Neue Folge. Bd. 4. Omina, Orakel, Rituale und Beschwörungen*, eds. B. Janowski and G. Wilhelm (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008) 331–85 and 417–45.

7 For more details, see W.M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," ANRW II 18.5 (1995): 3398–3412 and J.L. Calvo Martínez, "Cien años de investigación sobre la magia antigua," *MHNH* 1 (2001): 7–60.

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The first effort to collect and edit uniformly all available manuscripts with spells in Greek from Egypt, an international project directed by Karl Preisendanz in the first half of the twentieth century, resulted in the still indispensable two volumes of *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (*PGM* I and II; published in 1928 and 1931 by Verlag B. G. Teubner in Leipzig). The third volume, including additional spells, reconstructed hymns, and extensive indices, was projected to appear in 1941, but never saw the light of day due to the destruction of the print plates during the air raid on Leipzig on the night of December 3 to 4, 1943.[8] The ill-fated third volume was eventually published, excluding the indices, as part of the second volume of the re-edition of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* by Albert Henrichs (1973–74).[9]

The *Papyri Graecae Magicae* provide standardized transcriptions, critical apparatus, and a German translation. Spells in Old-Coptic are included, whereas those in Demotic were left out. The unfortunate absence of the latter did not only violate the integrity of the ancient manuscripts, but may also partly explain why the Greek spells were for the longest time privileged over the Demotic ones in the study of Greco-Egyptian private ritual—and why the latter has often been treated as a form of Greco-Roman magic rather than as an Egyptian phenomenon.

The imbalanced situation was redressed in 1986 with the publication of *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells* (*GMPT*), a joint effort by an international group of scholars directed by Hans Dieter Betz. The volume offers English translations of all manuscripts already found in *Papyri Graecae Magicae I–III*—now with the Demotic spells included—as well as translations of additional spells discovered after 1941, all provided with short explanations in footnotes, but without critical apparatus. A projected second volume with indices and comprehensive bibliography was never produced.[10] The volume remains the standard English translation to date.

Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini collected and re-edited all Greek spells that had been edited in scattered publications between 1941 and 1989, in the two volumes of *Supplementum Magicum* (*Suppl. Mag.*; 1990–92). Unlike *GMPT*, *Suppl. Mag.* offers transcriptions, critical apparatus, papyrological and

8 Its projected structure is laid out in K. Preisendanz, "Zur Überlieferung der griechischen Zauberpapyri," in *Miscellanea Critica,* ed. Johannes Irmscher, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1964), 203–17. Note that several manuscripts were renumbered at a later stage. I thank Rosario Pintaudi for sharing with me a scan of the proofs of *PGM* III.

9 A PDF of the indices (scanned from the original proofs) can now be consulted at http://hum2.leidenuniv.nl/pdf/communicatie/PGMIII.pdf.

10 The second edition of 1992 contains corrections to the translations and an expanded bibliography.

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palaeographical information, and detailed line-by-line commentary to the spells. In this regard, *Suppl. Mag.* is the first of the three corpora to respect the manuscripts as both text documents and physical artefacts.

The adopted numbering system is somewhat confusing, ever more so since the publication of the additional corpora. Originally, Preisendanz made a distinction between papyri of a pagan and a Christian nature and between materials on papyrus, ostraca and wood. According to this system, pagan papyri have Roman numerals, while Christian papyri come with Arabic numerals; for both, the acronym *PGM* is used and line numbers are counted in Arabic numerals (e.g. *PGM* IV.154–285 and *PGM* 3.1–4). Materials on ostraca are given the acronym O with an Arabic numeral and wooden tablets are counted as T with Arabic numerals. Preisendanz also assigned *PGM* line numbers to spells transcribed in Old-Coptic (despite the use of the word "Greek" in the acronym; e.g. *PGM* IV.1–25), but not to those in Demotic as he left those spells out altogether. This partial treatment of the materials was remedied with the inclusion of the associated Demotic spells in GMPT, where they are identified and numbered as *PDM* with Roman numerals in lower case (e.g. *PDM* xiv). The editors of the *Suppl. Mag.* have rightly given up on the earlier distinctions. All spells, whether pagan or Christian, written on papyrus, an ostracon or a metal tablet, are numbered SM with Arabic numerals. As *Suppl. Mag.* includes those manuscripts that were identified after 1941 and translated in GMPT, spells *PGM* LXXXIII–CXXX (as numbered in *GMPT*) now have an additional *Suppl. Mag.* number.[11]

The number of manuscripts collected in these corpora is considerable. *Papyri Graecae Magicae* I contains 7 individual manuscripts (*PGM* I–VI). The first edition of *Papyri Graecae Magicae* II contains 115 individual documents, of which 75 were considered pagan papyri (*PGM* VII–LX), 31 Christian papyri (*PGM* 1–20), 5 ostraca (O 1–5) and 4 wooden tablets (T 1–2c). The third volume was to add another 21 pagan (*PGM* LXI–LXXXI) and 4 Christian papyri (*PGM* 21–24), which can now be consulted in the second edition of *PGM* II. This brings the total to 147 individual manuscripts. GMPT includes another 48 manuscripts (*PGM* LXXXII–CXXX and *PDM* Suppl.). *Suppl. Mag.* contains editions of all additional GMPT spells (except for *PGM* LXXXII) and adds another 53 (*Suppl. Mag.* 1–100). The grand total of the combined corpora is thus 248 items (147 + 48 + 53). Since the publication of *Suppl. Mag.*, about another

11 For a convenient concordance, see *Suppl. Mag.* II, 367–68.

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100 manuscripts have been identified and edited.[12] Therefore, to date, about 350 individual manuscripts are available for study in scholarly editions.[13]

3.2 *Formularies and Activated Materials*

Instead of dividing the manuscripts by language and so creating a division that was not meaningful to the compilers and users of the manuscripts, it is more useful to distinguish between, on the one hand, texts that give instructions and list the required implements and ingredients and, on the other hand, materials that are the result of these rites. The former are recipes, which were collected in formularies; the latter are applied or activated materials that were either used in the course of a ritual and activated for its duration, such as divination materials,[14] or were charged through ritual and meant to yield results after the completion of the rite, such as amulets, curse tablets, and figurines. They can easily be distinguished. Being custom-made, activated materials include the name of the client, patient, beneficiary, or victim, such as "Ptolemais to whom Aias gave birth" (*Suppl. Mag.* 47 passim), and occasionally further details relevant to the situation. Recipes give a template text to be filled in at the moment of activation, referring to the persons involved as "So-and-so to whom So-and-so gave birth" and allowing for contextualization of, and elaboration upon, a prescribed invocation with boilerplates such as "concerning the such-and-such matter" and "add the usual as you want".

Of the extant 350 manuscripts, the majority are activated amulets and curses. Most are very short in length, written on scraps of papyrus or metal, and show signs of folding and piercing. The number of formularies is relatively low, but due to the length and varied content of some of them, they feature prominently—perhaps disproportionately—in the study of ancient magic. They differ substantially in length, organization, and quality of execution. In their form and content, they continue a longstanding scribal practice of compiling, classifying, preserving, and transmitting spells for healing, protection, and divination in ancient Egypt and the Near East. Most are miscellanies of recipes for various applications, but a few collect exclusively recipes for

12 I thank Franziska Naether (TM-Magic) for providing me with this number (June 2018).

13 Discarded from the corpus due to misidentification: *PGM* XXVI (fragment of the *Sortes Astrampsychi*); *PGM* XXXVII (Greek translation of Egyptian priestly oath as contained in the *Book of the Temple*); *PGM* XXXa–f, XXXIa–c, LXXIII, LXXVI, P1, P8a–b, and P24 (oracle tickets). See further Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3456–59.

14 For examples of applied divination materials, see *Suppl. Mag.* 65 and 66.

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healing.[15] Some are carefully laid out and skillfully written on scrolls or codices, others are scribbled on loose leaves. The former are clearly products of professional scribes, who may have worked for paying customers, whereas the latter may well be the working papers of individual ritualists who jotted down recipes as they came across them, collecting them into folders. Single recipes may also have been carried as amulets in themselves. Despite these overt differences, the occasional references to mother copies, the use of a shared technical vocabulary, and the recurrence of close parallels in invocations and hymns between formularies, demonstrate that the formularies and their recipes are products of a text community whose members shared scribal habits and standards and exchanged manuscripts across Egypt.

Amulets and curse tablets have been recovered from all areas of the Roman Empire, but formularies have only been discovered in Egypt to date.[16] Nonetheless, formularies were also used outside Egypt, as literary sources demonstrate. For example, Acts 19:19 seems to relate how sorcerers, now converted to Christianity, collected and publicly burned what were presumably formularies.[17] More instructive evidence for the use of formularies is provided by close correspondence between activated materials and instructions in extant formularies as well as by marked parallels between formulas and designs on activated materials from different times and places. Although evidence for the former is very low in number, four cases confirm that the preserved formularies are of a type that was in active use.[18] A recipe for binding a lover by producing a female clay figurine with 13 needles piercing her body (*PGM* IV.296–434) provides the template for four assemblages of curse materials that

15 Attempts to identify principles of organization in the formularies: L. LiDonnici, "Compositional Patterns in PGM IV (= P.Bibl.Nat.Suppl. gr. No. 574)," *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 40 (2003): 141–78; R.G. Edmonds III, "At the Seizure of the Moon. The Absence of the Moon in the Mithras Liturgy," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. S. Noegel, J. Walker, and B. Wheeler (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 223–39, esp. 234–35; R. Martín-Hernández, "A Coherent Division of a Magical Handbook. Using Lectional Signs in PGM VII," *Segno e testo* 13 (2015): 147–164; K. Dosoo, "The Creation of the Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden," (forthcoming).

16 The Jewish *Book of Mysteries* (*Sefer ha-Razim*) and *Sword of Moses* (*Harba de Mosheh*), as well as the Christian *Testament of Solomon*, which are dated to the early Byzantine period, are reconstructed from medieval copies; see below, Bohak, Chapter 16.

17 See also Lucian of Samosata, *Philopseudes* 31 (second century CE), Ammianus Marcellinus 29, 2.4 (371 CE). Cf. Sanzo, above, Chapter 10, for a critical reading of Acts 19:19.

18 For more examples, see Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3416–19 and D. Jordan, "Inscribed Lead Tablets from the Games in the Sanctuary of Poseidon," *Hesperia* 63.1 (1994): 111–26, see 123–25.

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have been recovered in Egypt (*Suppl. Mag.* 46–51).[19] It is noteworthy that none of the assemblages agrees in every detail with the instructions of the extant recipe—or with each other, for that matter. Similarly, the design and *voces magicae* engraved on a gem found in Beirut, Lebanon, matches closely the instructions given in *PGM* IV.1716–1870, a recipe entitled "Sword of Dardanos."[20] Thirdly, a lead tablet from Rome (DT 188) is inscribed with a curse against a certain Nikomedes, that parallels the text given in *PGM* LVIII.1–14, a fourth century formulary from Egypt. Lastly, a textual amulet found in House 3 in Kellis (P. Kellis Gr. 87) was in all likelihood copied from a formulary found in the very same dwelling (P. Kellis Gr. 85).[21] It is notable, and perhaps only accidental, that no physical evidence for the application of the recipes in the Demotic formularies has so far been identified.

More numerous are examples of applied materials that reveal evidence for being produced according to instructions from formularies that have not been preserved. Several engraved gems and inscribed metal tablets contain phrases from formularies, such as headings and instructions, which were mistakenly copied together with the actual words of magic, either out of negligence, ignorance, or reverence for the mother copy.[22] Obvious similarities between formulas on two or more items are also indicative of scribes consulting formularies, as can be observed in comparing an attraction spell on papyrus from Egypt (*PGM* XIXa) with a silver phylactery from the Levant.[23] Particularly telling are two unrelated assemblages, each discovered in an earthen vessel, of a

19 See below, Wilburn, Chapter 18 for references.

20 R. Mouterde, "Le Glaive de Dardanos. Objets et inscriptions magiques de Syrië," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 15.3 (1930): 53–136, see 53–64.

21 M. de Haro Sanchez, "Les Papyrus iatromagiques grecs de Kellis," *Lucida Intervalla* 37 (2008): 79–98, 88.

22 For an insightful example, see D. Jordan, "Magica Graeca Parvula," *ZPE* 100 (1994): 321–35, 325–33. See also Jordan, "Notes on two Michigan Magical Papyri," *ZPE* 136 (2001): 183–93; Jordan, "Intrusions into the Text of the Amulet P. Kellis G. I 87?," *ZPE* 137 (2001): 34; Jordan, "Three Notes," *ZPE* 152 (2005): 155–56, no. 2. For further references, see C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 33, fn. 137–40 and *Suppl. Mag.* II, 352 s.v. 'formularies.'

23 F. Heintz, "A Greek Silver Phylactery in the MacDaniel Collection," *ZPE* 112 (1996): 295–300. Further examples: 1) two gold lamellae, one from Rome (II CE) and the other from York (III–IV CE), whose *charaktēres* and inscription are almost identical and may be paralleled in *PGM* XIII.1057; Sergio Giannobile, "Il dio Ptah nella documentazione magica: amuleti e papyri," *ZPE* 152 (2005): 161–67; 2) curse tablets from the Athenian agora: D. Jordan, "Defixiones from a Well near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 54.3 (1985): 205–55, see 233–49 and Jordan, "New Archaeological Evidence for the Practice of Magic in Classical Athens," in *Praktika of the 12th International Congress of Classical Archaeology* (Athens: The Congress, 1988), 273–77.

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pair of wax figurines in embrace wrapped inside a sheet of papyrus inscribed with an erotic curse.[24] The similarity in applied techniques, materials, and curse formulae demonstrates that the ritualists followed instructions from a formulary.

3.3 *Ancient Archives*

Most manuscripts are unprovenanced and without archaeological context. This unfortunate situation deprives us of valuable information about the physical locations and social milieus of their manufacture, use, and deposition. Amulets and curse tablets are generally isolated finds, but the most extensive formularies were found as part of archives. To date, four such archives can be reconstructed through a combination of codicology, paleography, and archival research; one dossier comprises texts found together in-situ in a residential dwelling in Kellis (Dakhleh Oasis).[25] Unlike the modern corpora, these groups were constituted in antiquity. A comparison of the make-up of these archives has the potential of providing insight into the social, cultural, and institutional backgrounds of the ancient collectors.

The so-called *Theban Magical Library* (3rd–4th c. CE) is by far the most important archive for the number of its manuscripts, their length, and varied content.[26] Purportedly purchased in Luxor (ancient Thebes), the diplomat and collector Jean d'Anastasy sold them to European museums and libraries between 1828 and 1857. The library consists of three scrolls of the late second/early third century CE, written primarily in Demotic (with a few embedded incantations in Greek), and eight scrolls and codices of the fourth century CE that are written in Greek (with a few sections in Old-Coptic in *PGM* IV).

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24 The assemblage from Assyut is now in Cologne (5th c. CE; *Suppl. Mag.* 45, *GMPT* CI): D. Wortmann, "Neue magische Texte," *Bonner Jahrbücher des Rheinischen Landesmuseum in Bonn* 168 (1968): 56–111, 85–102 (no. 4); see also J.G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 101–106 (no. 30). The assemblage of unknown provenance is now in Munich (4th c. CE): W.M. Brashear, "Ein neues Zauberensemble in München," *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 19 (1992): 79–109.

25 K. Dosoo, "Magical Discourses, Ritual Collections: Cultural Trends and Private Interests in Egyptian Handbooks and Archives," in *Proceedings of the 27th International Congress of Papyrology*, ed. Tomasz Derda (Warsaw: The Faculty of Law and Administration of the University of Warsaw, the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, and Fundacja im. Rafała Taubenschlaga, 2016), 699–716.

26 Most recently: K. Dosoo, "A History of the Theban Magical Library," *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 53 (2016): 251–274. Its 10 formularies take up 193 of 327 pages of translation in *GMPT*. Accordingly, they feature disproportionately in discussions on ancient magic as type texts, but we may well be dealing with the idiosyncratic collecting needs or tastes of a particular individual or group.

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The sophisticated intermingling of Demotic and hieratic cursive in the early bookrolls suggests that they are the products of scribes trained in an Egyptian temple scriptorium.[27] If the final, fourth-century collector of the library was a member of such a priestly milieu remains open to question. The library exhibits a pronounced interest in divination and alchemy.

	Manuscript	TM	Type	Format	Language
PGM XII/*PDM* xii	Leiden I 384	55954	formulary	scroll	Dem + Gr
PGM XIV/*PDM* xiv	Leiden I 383 + BM 100070	55955	formulary	scroll	Dem + Gr
PDM Suppl.	Louvre E3229	64218	formulary	scroll	Dem + Gr
PGM I	Berlin 5025	88396	formulary	scroll	Gr
PGM VI + II	London 47 + Berlin 5026	60673+88397	formulary	scroll	Gr
PGM IV	Bibl. Nat. suppl. gr. 574	64343	formulary	codex	Gr + Old-Coptic
PGM V	London 46	64368	formulary	codex	Gr
PGM XIII	Leiden I 395	64446	formulary	codex	Gr
PGM Va	Holmiensis p. 42	64429	recipe for divination	loose leaf	Gr
Ø	Leiden I 397	61300	formulary, alchemy	codex	Gr
Ø	Holmiensis	64429	formulary, alchemy	codex	Gr

27 Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), 48–62 and 285–94.

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The two formularies that constitute the *Fayum Magical Archive* (4th c. CE) were acquired in 1920 for the University of Oslo by Samson Eitrem.[28] They probably come from Theadelphia in the Fayum.[29]

	Manuscript	TM	Purpose	Format	Language
PGM XXXVI	Oslo I, 1	64479	formulary	scroll	Gr, Coptic
PGM XXXVIII	Oslo I, 3	64480	formulary	fragm.	Gr

The British Museum purchased the three manuscripts that form the *Hermonthis Magical Archive* (4th c. CE) from an Egyptian "native" in 1888.[30] PGM XIa is written on the back of a reused account of 336 CE that concerns an estate in the area of Hermonthis (TM 33213).

	Manuscript	TM	Type	Format	Language
PGM VII	London 121	60204	formulary	scroll	Gr
PGM VIII	London 122	59324	formulary	scroll	Gr
PGM XIa	London 125	64578	recipe for parhedros	scroll	Gr

The *Kellis Magical Archive* (late 4th c. CE) is a dossier of texts that were found dispersed with many other texts (in Greek, Coptic, Latin, and Syriac), domestic items, and tools in a multi-room residential dwelling in Kellis in the Dakhleh Oasis (House 3 of Area A). The house was inhabited by members of a Manichaean community.[31]

28 Dosoo, "Magical Discourses, Ritual Collections," 711, fn. 33.

29 Even if Theadelphia were not their provenance, a provenance from the Fayum seems secure. *PGM* XXXVI.312–20 embeds a Coptic sentence in the Fayumic dialect (line 315).

30 Dosoo, "Magical Discourses, Ritual Collections," 711, fn. 34; Dosoo, "A History of the Theban Magical Library," 265–66. The British Museum purchased *PGM* IX and X in the same year; they may thus also belong to the archive: *Catalogue of Additions to the MSS in the BM (1888–1893)* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1894), 390–91 (pap. 123 and 124).

31 Dosoo, "Magical Discourses, Ritual Collections," 711, fn. 35; K.A. Worp, *Greek Papyri from Kellis: I* (Oxford: Oxbow, 1995); A. Alcock, I. Gardner, and P. Mirecki, "Magical

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Publication	TM	Type	Format	Language
Kellis I, 82	109540	calendar, hemerology	wooden tablet	Gr
Kellis I, 83	113752	calendar, hemerology	sheet	Gr
Kellis I, 84	97894	horoscope	wooden tablet	Gr
Kellis I, 85a+b	64442	formulary	scroll, fragm.	Gr
Kellis I, 86	64440	fever amulet	sheet	Gr
Kellis I, 87	64441	fever amulet	sheet	Gr
Kellis I, 88	64435	formulary	wooden tablet	Gr
Kellis Copt., 35	85886	private letter, with separation spell	sheet	Coptic

The *Multilingual Magical Archive* (5th–6th c. CE) consists of multiple, very fragmentary manuscripts (without provenance).[32] The archive is significant for its combination of Greek, Coptic, and Aramaic.

	Manuscript	TM	Type	Format	Language
Suppl. Mag. 96A/ *PGM* CXXIIIa	Mil. Vogl. 1245	65847	formulary	rotulus	Gr
Suppl. Mag. 96B *PGM* CXXIIIb	Mil. Vogl. 1246	65847	formulary	fragm.	Gr
Suppl. Mag. 96C/ *PGM* CXXIIIc	Mil. Vogl. 1247–48	65847	formulary	fragm.	Gr
Suppl. Mag. 96D/ *PGM* CXXIIId	Mil. Vogl. 1249	65847	formulary	fragm.	Gr
Suppl. Mag. 96E/ *PGM* CXXIIIe	Mil. Vogl. 1250	65847	formulary	fragm.	Gr
Suppl. Mag. 96F/ *PGM* CXXIIIf	Mil. Vogl. 1252–53	65847	formulary	fragm.	Gr
Suppl. Mag. 97/ *PGM* CXXIV	Mil. Vogl. 1251	65848	formulary	rotulus	Gr
Suppl. Mag. 98/ *PGM* CXXVa–f	Mil. Vogl. 1254–62	65849–54	formularies	fragm.	Gr, Aramaic
Ø	Mil. Vogl. Copt. 16	102252	formulary	codex	Coptic

Spell, Manichaean Letter," in *Emerging from Darkness to Light. Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources*, ed. P. Mirecki and J. BeDuhn (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 1–32.

32 Dosoo, "Magical Discourses, Ritual Collections," 711, fn. 36; G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 167–68.

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4 The Formularies

4.1 *Classification of Recipes*

The formularies are compilations of an assortment of recipes. In essence, they center around four basic concerns: knowledge, control over others, protection, and healing. Most recipes can accordingly be classified under one of these four labels. In the following survey, the 13 sub-categories are based both on recipe titles and objectives as stated in the recipe proper.[33] Most recipes have a straightforward title and one particular purpose, but a few recipes claim to have multiple applications, ranging from regular cursing and protection to marvelous feats, including freezing rivers and seas, serving sumptuous banquets, and flying in the air.[34] Such fantastical aspirations inform us about the ritualists' self-perception and of what they believed the powers and function of their brand of private ritual could be.[35]

4.1.1 Knowledge

4.1.1.1 *Acquiring Esoteric Knowledge, i.e. Divination*

Recipes for divinatory practices (*manteion*) are remarkably numerous and complex in the formularies of the *Theban Magical Library*, but occur also in some other manuscripts. Archaeological evidence for their application is however scant.[36] Four basic modes of inquiry can be distinguished: interpreting given signs, producing a face-to-face encounter with a deity or ghost, putting a medium in a trance, and putting two possible answers to a deity.

The first technique consists of throwing a dice to generate a number that leads to a pre-existing oracular answer, such as a Homeric verse (*PGM* LXII.47–51; *Homeromanteion: PGM* VII.1–148; *Suppl. Mag*. 77; P. Oxy LVI 3831)[37]

33 Compare my categories with Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3499–3506 and Dosoo, "Magical discourses, ritual collections."

34 For example: *PGM I*.98–126 and 172–92; III.161–64; IV.2152–78 and 2205–40; XII.270–73, 277–82, 301–06; XIII.234–341 (the latter reads as a table of contents to the entire corpus).

35 These issues are well addressed in R. Gordon, "Reporting the Marvelous: Private Divination in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Envisioning magic: A Princeton seminar and symposium*, ed. P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 65–92 and Gordon, "Shaping the Text."

36 Examples are *Suppl. Mag*. 65–66 and the famous magic apparatus from Pergamum; R. Wünsch, *Antikes Zaubergerät aus Pergamon* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1905).

37 Franco Maltomini, "P. Lond. 121 (= *PGM* VII), 1–221: Homeromanteion," *ZPE* 106 (1995): 107–22; D. Collins, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 122–31; G. Schwendner, "Under Homer's Spell. Bilingualism, Oracular Magic, and the Michigan Excavation at Dimê," in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, ed. L. Ciraolo and J. Seidel, Ancient Magic and Divination 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 107–18.

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or of calculating a quotient from a given set of numbers (*PGM* XII.351–64; LXII.47–51).[38] The second technique, performed with or without a (child) medium,[39] produces a true encounter (*sustasis; pḥ-nṯr*)[40] or direct vision of a deity (*autoptos, autopsia; pḥ-nṯr*) in the flame of a lamp (*lychnomanteia; šn n pꜣ ḫbs*), in the reflections of light in a bowl of water with oil slick (*lekanomanteia; šn hn*), or in a dream (*oneiromanteion, oneiraitêton*).[41] In their prescribed actions, these rites mimic Egyptian statue cult: in a dark, secluded, and purified room (like the sanctuary in an Egyptian temple), the ritualist, often attired in priestly garb, invokes the physical presence of a deity with hymns and offers up food, libations, and incense.[42] Additional recipes instruct how to make eye-ointments that enhance perception. Rites for raising a ghost from its corpse for consultation (*nekuomanteia, nekuoagōgē*) are relatively rare.[43] The third

38 F. Graf, "Rolling the Dice for an Answer," in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, ed. S.I. Jonhston and P. Struck (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 51–97; F. Naether, *Die Sortes Astrampsychi. Problemlösungsstrategien durch Orakel im römischen Ägypten*, Orientalische Religionen in der Antike 3 (Berlin: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 311–57. Cf. the Demotic Isis Divination Handbook: M.A. Stadler, *Isis, das göttliche Kind und die Weltordnung. Neue religiöse Texte aus dem Fayum nach dem Papyrus Wien D. 12006 Recto* (Vienna: Verlag Brüder Hollinek, 2004), 242–52 and Stadler, "Isis würfelt nicht," *Studi di Egittologia e di Papirologia* 3 (2006): 187–203. A dice inscribed in Demotic with the name of an Egyptian deity on each of its 20 sides: M. Minas-Nerpel, "A Demotic Inscribed Icosahedron from Dakhleh Oasis," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 93 (2007): 137–48.

39 Stadler, *Isis, das göttliche Kind*, 207–14; S.I. Johnston, "Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination," *Arethusa* 34.1 (2001): 97–117.

40 Of the Egyptian terms mentioned in this paragraph, *pḥ-nṯr* may historically be the name of the overarching category. Due to the paucity of instructive sources *pḥ-nṯr* remains an elusive category, but it is clear that it refers to a set of rituals to provoke contact with a deity with the aim to interrogate him; "to reach the god," i.e. to consult him. The rite can be a public or private affair, be concerned with issues that are relevant to the community at large or those that only pertain to a sole individual, and, depending on its purpose, can be considered an acceptable and lawful form of enquiry or acquire an illicit character; J.M. Kruchten, *Le grand texte oraculaire de Djéhoutymose*, Monographies Reine Élisabeth 5 (Brussels: Brepols, 1986), 328–31 and R.K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 214–20.

41 These categories are often fused in the actual spells.

42 Likewise, the use of bricks to demarcate ritual space in an otherwise domestic space mirrors the Egyptian temple foundation ritual: S. Nagel, "Was im Tempel passiert, bleibt nicht (mehr) im Tempel. Transformationen von ägyptischem Tempelritual und rituellem Raum in den Praktiken der demotischen und griechischen magischen Papyri," in *Der ägyptische Tempel als ritueller Raum*, ed. S. Baumann and H. Kockelmann, Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion 17 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 507–536.

43 See lead tablet *Suppl. Mag.* 66; necromancy is referenced in *PGM* III.275–81 and VII.284–99 (calendars of suitable and unsuitable days) and *PDM* XIV.84. For necromancy in veiled terms: C.A. Faraone, "The Collapse of Celestial and Chthonian Realms in a Late Antique

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option is inducing a medium into a trance (*kataptōsis*), who thereupon serves as the mouthpiece of the deity being interrogated. With the fourth technique, the practitioner poses a yes-or-no question to the deity and asks him to appear in one of two pre-determined shapes relative to the answer (VII.250–54, 255–59; XXIIb.27–31, 32–35; XIV.232–38).

4.1.1.2 *Acquiring Foreknowledge and Memory*

Related to divination rites are requests for foreknowledge (*prognōsis, prognōstikē*) and memory (*mnēmonikē*). As follows from the recipe title "charm for foreknowledge and memory" (*PGM* III.424), they were considered conceptually related. Foreknowledge charms allow the ritualist to know in advance what is in people's minds and what will happen in the future (III.263–75, 282–409, 424–66; V.213–303). Resembling direct-vision rites in procedure, they do not aim for a consultation with a deity, though. Instead, the deity is asked to grant the ritualist overall and unmediated foreknowledge. They also allow for reading sealed letters (III.371 and V.301; cf. *PDM* Suppl. 168–84). Memory spells enable the ritualist to remember what he heard and saw during a divine consultation or dream vision (I.232–47; II.16–20, 40–42; III.424–66, 467–78); other spells advice keeping a writing tablet at hand to write down what the deity says (e.g. VIII.89–90).

4.1.1.3 *Identifying a Thief*

Spells for catching a thief represent a specialized form of divination (*kleptēn piasai*, *ky n gm ʿḏe*). They determine by ordeal whether a person is guilty or innocent. For example, the person whose eye swells up while the ritualist strikes a drawing of an eye with a hammer (V.70–95), or who does not swallow the potion offered (V.172–212), or who speaks up when drawing a knot (*PDM* lxi.79–94)[44] betrays himself as the thief.[45]

Apollonian Invocation (PGM I 262–347)," in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in late Antique Religions*, ed. R.S. Boustan and A.Y. Reed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 213–32 and Faraone, "Necromancy goes Underground: The Disguise of Skull and Corpse Divination in the Paris Magical Papyri (PGM IV.1928–2144)," in *Mantikê*, 255–82. For an Egyptological perspective, see R.K. Ritner, "Necromancy in Ancient Egypt," in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, ed. L. Ciraolo and J. Seidel (Groningen: E.J. Brill, 2000), 91–98.

44 A. von Lieven, "Osiris, der Dekan *Ḥ3w* und der Tod. Zur Deutung des Spruches zum Finden eines Diebes in pPM 10588," *Enchoria* 27 (2001): 82–87 and T.S. Richter, "Der Dieb, der Koch, seine Frau und ihr Liebhaber. Collectanea magica für Hans-W. Fischer-Elfert," *Enchoria* 29 (2004/2005): 67–78, see 67–71.

45 Clusters of thief spells are *Suppl. Mag.* 86 and possibly *PGM* III.479–94.

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4.1.1.4 *Seeking Community with the Divine*

A few spells are not aimed at resolving a practical matter, but concerned with establishing intimate contact between the ritualist and the supreme deity. *PGM* IV contains an elaborate tractate that gives detailed instructions for, and descriptions of, an ascent through the seven planetary spheres and an encounter with the highest god, Helios Mithras (IV.475–820). The text refers to itself as "ritual of immortalization" (*apathanatismos*), but the ritual's final goal, in the extant text at least, is receiving oracular revelations from the deity.[46] *PGM* XIII preserves three variant versions, given in succession, of a text entitled "Monad" and "Eighth Book of Moses" (*PGM* XIII.1–343, 343–646, 646–734).[47] The composition lays out the "rite of the Monad" (*teletē tēs Monados*), a ritual to produce an encounter with the highest god so as to ask him about one's fate and to have future misfortune averted.[48] The invocation includes a theogonic account about god creating the major forces and principles of nature by laughing seven times, which must have been excerpted at some stage from another, unrelated composition. A self-contained prayer to the sun god (*PGM* III.494–611) concludes with a *Prayer of Thanksgiving* that is also known from the Latin version of the *Perfect Discourse* (*Asclepius*) and from Nag Hammadi Codex VI. In the latter codex the prayer serves as a conclusion to the Hermetic *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, which is a conversation about initiation in the form of a heavenly ascent.[49] In the *PGM* prayer itself, the ritualist addresses the sun god

46 This ritual is often called the *Mithras Liturgy*, after Albrecht Dieterich's pioneering work *Eine Mithras Liturgie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903; 2nd ed. 1910; 3rd ed. 1923). The text is however neither a liturgy, nor concerned with a communal mystery rite such as the Mithras mysteries were. For a comprehensive study, see H.D. Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy." Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

47 For a translation with important annotations, see *GMPT* [Morton Smith]. The redaction history of the three versions is complex. For an attempt to distinguish successive phases and identify editorial alterations, see M. Smith, The "Eighth Book of Moses and How it Grew (P. Leid J 395)," in *Atti del XVII congresso internazionale di papirologia* (Napoli: Centro internazionale per lo studio dei papiri ercolanesi, 1984), 683–93 and Smith, "P. Leiden J 395 (*PGM* XIII) and its Creation Legend," in *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky*, ed. A. Caquot, M. Hadas-Lebel, and J. Riaud (Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 491–8.

48 Version A concludes with a catalogue of practical applications that require the "Great Name" given by the deity in the course of the ritual. Comparison of all three versions reveals that the request for the Great Name is a secondary interpolation; Smith, "The Eighth Book of Moses," 685–86.

49 P. Dirkse and J. Brashler, "The Prayer of Thanksgiving" in *Nag Hammade Codex V, 2–5 and VI*, ed. D.M. Parrot, Nag Hammadi Studies 11 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), 375–87; J.-P. Mahé, "Introduction to the Prayer of Thanksgiving," in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures. The International Edition*, ed. M. Meyer (San Francisco: Harper, 2007), 419–21. A synoptic

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with his secret names and manifestations for each of the twelve hours of the day and requests for a blessing, a procedure similar to the prayers IV.1115–66, 1167–1226 and VII.756–94. In another spell, a prayer to the sun god is used to establish an encounter with one's personal daimon (VII.505–28).[50]

These singular spells are clearly composites and betray several layers of redaction. Whatever the intentions of the original composers of the various parts may have been, the motivation for including them in the extant formularies was no doubt different. It is therefore difficult to classify the texts within the corpus and accordingly their interpretation remains a matter of contention. Some scholars regard them as liturgies for initiation rites, an interpretation possibly corroborated by the intertextual connections of the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*.[51] Others see them as adaptations of texts that had their original function in unrelated religious communities, such as in mystery cults and Hermetic groups, but were turned by magicians into ordinary divination rituals.

4.1.2 Control

4.1.2.1 *Acquiring Control over Other Persons*

Numerous recipes are concerned with eliminating competition in interpersonal relationships and subjecting persons to one's will. This diverse group comprises binding spells (*katadesmos*), erotic binding spells (*philtrokatadesmos; rꜣ n tỉ sḫmt mr ḥwṯ*),[52] attraction spells (*agōgē, agōgimon*),[53] spells to enflame the heart (*empyron*),[54] separation spells (*diakopos; prḏ*), spells to

edition of the relevant texts is given in J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte. Les textes hermétiques de Nag Hammadi et leurs parallèles grecs et latins*, Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi, Section: Textes 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 1978), 137–167.

50 For this spell, see J. Bergman, "Ancient Egyptian Theogony in a Greek Magical Papyrus," in *Studies in Egyptian Religion. Dedicated to Professor Jan Zandee*, ed. M. Heerma van Voss, Studies in the History of Religions, Supplements to Numen 43 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), 28–37.

51 Fritz Graf views them as initiation rites in the formation of professional magicians, the highest stage reached with the acquisition of a supernatural assistant (*parhedros*) and encounter (*systasis*) with the supreme deity; F. Graf, "The Magician's Initiation," *Helios* 21 (1994): 161–77 and Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 89–117. Reinhold Merkelbach sees them as priestly initiations originally used in the cult of the Alexandrian god Aion; R. Merkelbach, *Abrasax. Ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts. Band 3: zwei griechisch-ägyptische Weihzeremonien* (*Die Leidener Weltschöpfung, die Pschai-Aion-Liturgie*), Papyrologica Colonensia XVII.3 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992).

52 The Egyptian paraphrase means "spell to make a woman love a man" and can be used for any type of love charm.

53 For this type of binding spell, see Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 133–46.

54 This word is consistently mistranslated as "divination by fire" in *GMPT*; *PGM* VII.295, XXXVI.69, 102, and 295. In fact, it is a specialized term in reference to a type of attraction

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induce insomnia (*akrupnētikon*), spells to send nightmares (*oneiropompos, oneiropompeia; rꜣ n hb rswet, rꜣ r tỉ ḥy nktk bn*), spells to cause illness (*kataklitikon*), spells to produce enmity (*misēthron*), and spells to subject (*katochos, hypotaktikon*). The instructions usually prescribe invoking a chthonic deity, depositing a curse tablet in a cemetery or bath house, and summoning a ghost to haunt the victim.

4.1.2.2 *Acquiring Charisma and Admiration from Others for Self-enhancement*

Rituals of this kind are a counterpart to the former type. Instead of targeting and harming others, favor charms (*charitēsion; rꜣ n tỉ ḥst mrt šfet*) aim at transforming the client's perception in the eyes of others by bestowing him or her with positive virtues such as charm (*charis; ḥst*), affection (*philia; mrt*), success (*epitychia; šfet*), victory (*nikē*), loveliness (*epaphrodisia*), and repute (*doksa*).[55] Most rites are consecrations of inscribed metal tablets, engraved gems, or other amuletic objects that are to be worn in one's clothing or in a ring on one's finger. An alternative, less lasting method requires anointing the face with myrrh or oil. Conceptually related are victory charms (*nikētikon*) and charms to restrain anger (*thymokatochos*) as indicated by rubrics to recipes (e.g. XXXVI.35–68). Charms to attract customers (*katapraktikon, kataklētikon*) also belong in this category; however, they do not enhance the client's esteem but that of his workshop (IV.2373–2440, 3125–71; VIII.1–63). Certain ring spells (*daktylidion; gswr*) claim to achieve all of these objectives (e.g. *PGM* XII.201–69).

4.1.2.3 *Enhancing Male Potency and Female Libido*

Rites of this nature, perhaps best called aphrodisiacs, aim at overcoming either impotence in a man or reluctance to have sex in a woman. The former is most often treated with smearing a salve on the man's genitals, the latter with making the woman drink a glass of wine mixed with a drug. The recipes, usually very short and snappy, are written for a male clientele and presume in most cases that the woman is unaware of her suitor's intentions. The recipes also presume that the man and woman are already in contact; in this respect, the aphrodisiacs are fundamentally different from the love attraction spells (*agōgē, philtrokatadesmos*).

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spell that ignites fire in the heart of a victim by means of a burnt offering (persuasive analogy). It is not coincidental that it occurs in combination with *agôgimon*, VII.295, and *agôgê*, XXXVI.69, 295. It has nothing to do with acquiring knowledge from a deity or ghost.

55 J.F. Quack, "From Ritual to Magic: Ancient Egyptian Precursors of the Charitesion and their Social Setting," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. G. Bohak, Y. Harari and S. Shaked, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 15 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 43–84.

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4.1.2.4 *Acquiring a Supernatural Assistant*

These recipes are concerned with securing assistance from a supernatural being, either as an end in itself or as part of a larger ritual.[56] Such an assistant (*paredros*), either a deity, a demonic being, one's shadow, or even a material object, is supposed to act as a stand-by servant to the ritualist, fulfilling any assignment it is given. These assignments can range from the practical to the marvelous, from sending dreams and subjecting people to preparing sumptuous banquets.[57]

4.1.2.5 *Escaping from Confinement and Escaping Notice*

In a list of variant applications, the objectives of loosening shackles, opening closed doors, and producing invisibility are mentioned in combination (*PGM* I.101; see also XII.162). They are also listed, though not in sequence, in the catalogue of applications of XIII.235–340. In other instances, two of the three are mentioned in various combinations.[58] The three types, i.e. *desmoluton, anoixis thuras*, and *amaurōsis, amaurōtikon*, occur as unrelated recipes elsewhere, but their frequent association suggests that they were conceptually connected and perhaps to be applied in similar situations. None of the recipes is very informative about the possible context of performance, though. One recipe calls it a spectacular feat and speaks about "freeing yourself from danger" and providing "a way of escape" (*PGM* XII.160–78). Possibly these spells were intended to enable one to escape from prison and to remain unnoticed[59] in case of arrest for performing *mageia*.[60]

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56 L.J. Ciraolo, "Supernatural Assistants in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), 279–95; A. Scibilia, "Supernatural Assistance in the Greek Magical Papyri: The Figure of the Parhedros," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, ed. J. Bremmer and J. Veenstra (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 71–86; E. Pachoumi, *The Concepts of the Divine in the Greek Magical Papyri*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 102 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 35–61.

57 For a listing of possible uses of a *paredros*, see *PGM* I.98–126 and 172–92.

58 For example: V.488; XII.160–78; XII.279; XIII.1064; XXXVI.312–20.

59 L.R. LiDonnici, "The Disappearing Magician. Literary and Practical Questions about the Greek Magical Papyri," in *A Multiform Heritage. Fs. Robert A. Kraft*, ed. B.G. Wright (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1999), 227–43; R. Phillips, *In Pursuit of Invisibility: Ritual Texts from Late Roman Egypt*, American Studies in Papyrology 47 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

60 *Argonautika* IV.40 may corroborate this idea: Medea flees stealthily from the palace by using spells to open doors while remaining unnoticed.

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4.1.3 Protection

4.1.3.1 *Protecting against All Sorts of Danger and Misfortune*

Rites of protection produce magically charged objects (*phylaktērion; sꜣ*) that protect the wearer in daily life or for the duration of a potentially dangerous ritual, such as a face-to-face encounter with a chthonic deity or ghost.[61] Most recipes order the inscribing of a gold, silver, bronze or copper lamella or strip of papyrus or cloth with a charm, Homeric verse,[62] *voces magicae*, and/or magic letters and designs. After consecrating the amulet by verbal incantation, it is to be worn on the body. Activated amulets of this type have been recovered all over the Roman Empire.[63] Directions for consecrating engraved gems, which are so abundant in the archaeological record, are rare in the formularies.[64] As variants to consecrating and wearing an object amulet, a few rites are entirely oral in nature, such as prayers of deliverance (*rystikē*).[65]

4.1.4 Healing

4.1.4.1 *Healing Physical Ailments*

Recipes for healing are usually short and straightforward.[66] Ailments most often addressed are fever, shivering fits, headache, eye diseases, scorpion sting, and women ailments.[67] Most recommend placing an inscribed amulet on the affected body part. Two spells in *PGM* IV (1227–64 and 3007–86) and several in *PDM* xiv give incantations to drive out demons from a patient's body, thus

61 See below, Chapter 19.

62 For the use of Homeric verses for protection and healing, see Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*, 104–22.

63 R. Kotansky, "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 129, fn. 44: "nearly two-hundred magic *lamellae* are published or in private hands." Inscribed metal amulets of known provenance are collected in R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae. Part I: Published Texts of Known Provenance*, Papyrologica Coloniensia 22/1 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994). Textual amulets on papyrus are collected in *PGM* and *Suppl. Mag*. I.1–36.

64 There are only 18 references to gems in the extant formularies. See below, Chapter 17, for references.

65 *PGM* I.195–222, IV.1115–66, 1167–1226; see also VII.311–16, 317–18, 490–504.

66 M.H. Raj, *Médecins et malades de l'Égypte romaine. Étude socio-légale de la profession médicale et de ses praticiens du Ier au IV^e siècle ap. J.-C.*, Studies in Ancient Medicine 32 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), 268–78 (pp. 347–51 offer a list of *PGM* healing recipes); M. de Haro Sanchez, "Between Medicine and Magic: the Iatromagical Formularies and Medical Receptaries on Papyri Compared," *ZPE* 195 (2015): 179–89. Clusters of healing recipes are: *PGM* VII.193–21; *PDM* XIV.554–626, 935–1025, 1097–1103, 1219–27; *PGM* XXIIa; *Suppl. Mag*. 94 (= *PGM* XCIV); *Suppl. Mag.* 96 (= CXXIII).

67 For further categories, see the index in *Suppl. Mag.* II, 354–55, s.v. 'medical matters.'

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continuing a long-standing tradition of understanding internal, mental, and chronic diseases as resulting from demonic intrusion.

4.1.5 Miscellaneous

4.1.5.1 *Paignia or Table Gimmicks*

The formulary *PGM* VII contains a section of twelve short prescriptions entitled "Demokritos' *paignia*" (*PGM* VII.167–86). It is a collection of conjuring tricks and spells for facilitating excessive drinking and sex at a symposium. Similar recipes occur in *Suppl. Mag*. 76 (= *PGM* CXXVII), 83, 91 and *PGM* XIb. *Paignia*, perhaps best translated as 'jocular recipes', are also known from references in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*, and the *Cyranides*.[68] These are probably all remnants of an independent tradition of frivolous and naughty tricks.

4.1.5.2 *Reference*

The formularies are not only collections of prescriptions, but also incorporate encyclopedic knowledge required for successfully performing the rituals. This type of information is often integrated with the recipe's instructions, but occasionally also treated in a self-contained section. Such sections deal with calendars of suitable and unsuitable days (III.275–81; IV.835–49; VII.155–67, 272–83, 284–99),[69] instructions on how to properly pick plants (IV.286–95; 2967–3006),[70] and explanations of pharmacological terminology. As regards the latter, there is a list of "interpretations" enumerating code names with their proper meaning (XII.401–44)[71] and a set of encyclopedic entries containing succinct descriptions and translations of Greek terms into Demotic Egyptian (XIV.886–996).[72]

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68 D. Bain, "Salpe's PAIGNIA: Anthenaeus 322A and Plin. H.N. 28.38," *The Classical Quarterly* 48.1 (1998): 262–68 and M.W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001), 122–23.

69 For a general discussion, see still T. Hopfner, *Offenbarungszauber* I (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1990), §§822–35 (outdated in certain respects). An interesting parallel occurs in the Isis Divination Handbook, lines I.5–8; Stadler, *Isis, das göttliche Kind*, 166–67.

70 A. Delatte, *Herbarius. Recherches sur le cérémonial usité chez les anciens pour la cueillette des simples et des plantes magiques*, 3rd ed, (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 1961); Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 39f.

71 Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 185–203; L.R. LiDonnici, "Beans, Fleawort, and the Blood of a Hamadryas Baboon: Recipe Ingredients in Greco-Roman Magical Materials", in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 359–77. On pharmacology in the *PGM*, see J. Scarborough, "The Pharmacology of sacred Plants, Herbs, and Roots," in *Magika Hiera*, 138–74.

72 Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 116–17.

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4.2 *Scribal Features*

The extant formularies are evidently products of trained scribes. They also betray complex histories of deliberate compilation and redaction in their arrangement. For example, LiDonnici argues convincingly that the extensive codex *PGM* IV is a compilation of several smaller formularies, separated each by a short series of miscellaneous spells.[73] Likewise, many recipes are aggregates of alternative methods and variant incantations. It is therefore important to bear in mind that the extant recipes and formularies are the product of a complex history of textual transmission.

The Demotic formularies follow long-standing Egyptian scribal conventions. They exhibit the same scribal features as for example the contemporary hieratic and Demotic manuals from the Tebtunis Temple Library (active throughout 2nd c. CE).[74] Columns are framed by means of horizontal and vertical guidelines. Red ink is used for titles to recipes, for key words that structure longer recipes into subordinate units, and for quantities and measurements. Glosses are added to the main text with *ky ḏd* ("also called"), *ky ḏmꜥ* ("another manuscript (says)"), and *ḏd r* ("which means"). Recipes follow two formats: compartmentalized and integrated recipes. The former is the common format in hieratic formularies. Such recipes are usually short and retain a strict division between the directions for use and the incantation. The latter is used for the multi-step divine consultation recipes (only in *PDM*/*PGM* XIV). They integrate the instructions and incantations, following the sequence of the actual proceedings, as is the case in most *PGM* recipes.

Several Demotic recipes retain traces of translation and transcription from Greek source texts.[75] Not only does *PDM* xiv include three Greek incantations that the complier clearly lifted untranslated from his source, but also its *voces magicae*, vowel sequences, and palindromes were clearly transcribed from a source using Greek letters into an artificial alphabetic Demotic script. Noteworthy is also that the Greek abbreviation marks for *deina, helios* and *selēnē* occur in several Demotic recipes.[76] They demonstrate that the scribes,

73 LiDonnici, "Compositional Patterns in PGM IV."

74 J. Dieleman, "Scribal Practices in the Production of Magic Handbooks in Egypt," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. S. Shaked, Y. Harari and G. Bohak, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 15 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 85–117; K. Ryholt, "Scribal Habits at the Tebtunis Temple Library. On Materiality, Formal Features, and Palaeography," in *Scribal Repertoires in Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Early Islamic Period*, ed. J. Cromwell and E. Grossman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 153–83.

75 Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 63–80 and 103–44.

76 On the use of the *deina* sign in the *PDM*, see J. Dieleman, "What's in a Sign? Translating Filiation in the Demotic Magical Papyri," in *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt from the Ptolemies to the ʿAbbāsids*, ed. A. Papaconstantinou (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 127–52.

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despite being steeped in Egyptian scribal culture, were well acquainted with Greek scribal habits and regarded Greek-language formularies as authoritative source texts.

The Greek formularies are less uniform in their appearance. The page is organized with interlinear spaces, *paragraphos* (a horizontal stroke in the margin to indicate beginning or end of recipe), *ekthesis* (jutting out into the left margin), *eisthesis* (indenting), and occasionally *coronis* (an elaborate sign in the margin to indicate end of recipe)—all common scribal techniques in Greek literary and documentary papyri from Egypt. Recipes are further loosely subdivided into thematic units with controlled vocabulary, including *logos* ("formula"), *euchē* ("prayer"), *epanangos* ("coercive formula"), *diabolē* ("slander spell"), *didaskalia tēs praxeōs* ("explanation of the procedure"), *epithyma touto* ("this is the offering"). The metrical hymns are not distinguished from the ordinary text in their formal layout.[77] Given the high degree of metrical corruption, one may ask if the scribes recognized the hymns as metrical verse at all. Characteristic is also the use of a recurrent set of abbreviations and symbols for technical terms.[78]

Several features betray influence from Egyptian scribal culture. For example, the heading *allo*, "another," which is a label for successive recipes of the same kind, is a calque of *ky*/*kt*. Likewise, the gloss *allōs*, "otherwise," for signaling alternative information found in a variant manuscript, translates *ky ḏd* and *ky ḏmꜥ*.[79] Further dependence is manifest in the phrase "now, now, quickly, quickly" (*ēdē ēdē tachy tachy*), which is a calque of *ys ys tkr tkr*.[80] Its spelling often mimics Egyptian orthography in using the numeral to indicate repetition of the word (*ēdē B' tachy B'* < *ys sp-2 tkr sp-2*; e.g. VIII.52). Similarly, the filiation formula "NN whom NN bore" (*deina hon/hēn eteken hē deina*) derives from *mn r-ms mnt*.[81] These nondescript, conventional expressions make us realize that

77 L.M. Bortolani, *Magical Hymns from Roman Egypt: A Study of Greek and Egyptian Traditions of Divinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

78 For two convenient lists, see *PGM* II, 2nd ed., 269–70 and *Suppl. Mag.* II, 338.

79 These also occur in contemporary medical and alchemical manuals in Greek. For references, see D.G. Martinez, *P. Michigan XVI: a Greek Love Charm from Egypt* (*P. Mich. 757*) (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1991), 7, fn. 31.

80 The earliest occurrence of the expression is in the *Apis Embalming Ritual* (*ỉs sp-2 tkr sp-2*; extant version composed around 350 BCE); pZagreb 597–2, recto, col. 0, line 10: P. Meyrat, "The First Column of the Apis Embalming Ritual (Papyrus Zagreb 597–2)," in *Ägyptische Rituale der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, ed. J.F. Quack (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 263–337. The expression was eventually also transcribed and translated from the Greek into Hebrew and Aramaic spells: Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 282–83.

81 Dieleman, "What's in a Sign?," and D. Jordan, "CIL VIII 19 525(B).2 QPVVLVA = q(uem) p(eperit) vulva," *Philologus* 120 (1976): 127–32, esp. 130ff.

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the scribes who composed the Greek recipes were intimately familiar with the scribal conventions of the Egyptian scriptorium.

Many recipes call for drawing, incising, molding and sculpting images and figurines. Most often the design is described in words, but occasionally the recipe includes a simple line drawing as illustration.[82] Such sketches were, without exception, quickly and inexpertly executed and drawn with the same pen as used for writing the text. The four drawings included in the second/third century P. Leiden I 384 vo (*PGM* XII/*PDM* xii) are very much Egyptian in nature and design. They are quite similar in style and quality of execution to the crude vignettes found in some Egyptian funerary manuscripts of the Roman period, such as 'abbreviated' Books of Breathing, Books of Transformations, and Books of Traversing Eternity.[83] Like the formulary, these manuscripts come from Thebes. In the later formularies, however, the motifs and figures are less and less Egyptian in character and certainly less so in style. The demonic figures of the fourth century *PGM* XXXXVI from the Fayum represent an altogether different tradition of representing the human body.

4.3 *Bilingual Features*

An important feature of the formularies is their bilingual character. Not only do several manuscripts combine recipes in Greek and Egyptian, recipes also presume that the ritualist operates in a multilingual environment, as in the following request for favor and charm.

> Every tongue and every language should listen to me, because I am PERTAŌ [MĒCH CHACH] MNĒCH SAKMĒPH IAŌOUEĒ ŌĒŌ ŌĒŌ IEOUŌĒIĒIAĒA IĒŌUOEI. Give [me graciously] whatever you want.
>
> *PGM* XII.187–89

It is useful to make a distinction between factual and imagined bilingualism, for, although related, these two phenomena are different in nature and motivation. Factual bilingualism is true code switching, that is, the insertion of foreign-language words and the alternation between Greek and Egyptian in a single manuscript or even recipe.[84] Switching between Egyptian and

82 Gordon, "Shaping the Text," 97–107; J. Dijkstra, "The Interplay between Image and Text on Greek Amulets Containing Christian Elements from Late Antique Egypt," in *The Materiality of Magic*, ed. D. Boschung and J.N. Bremmer (Paderborn W. Fink, 2015), 271–92.

83 See further Mark Smith, *Traversing Eternity. Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

84 The following formularies exhibit Greek-Egyptian bilingualism. The earliest example is P. Oxy LXV 4468: Greek and Egyptian (transcribed in Greek letters; late I CE); the others

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Greek was not so much motivated by socio-pragmatic concerns as resulting from manuscript interference. By copying from source texts in both Greek and Egyptian, scribes selected and combined words, recipes, and incantations in both languages into the new formulary. They were obviously proficient in both languages: switches are always deliberate and never affect a recipe's coherence.

Alternation between recipes in Greek and Demotic occurs in P. Leiden I 384 verso (*PGM*/*PDM* XII), P. BM EA 10588 (*PGM*/*PDM* LXI), and P. Louvre E3229 (*PDM* Suppl.). Switching between Greek and Demotic within a single spell occurs only in the associated P. Leiden I 384 verso (*PGM*/*PDM* XII) and P. London-Leiden (*PDM*/ *PGM* XIV). In these few cases functional specialization is strictly maintained: Demotic is used for the instructions, Greek for the incantation. The following recipe, a request for a dream vision of Imhotep, may serve as an example.[85] The Demotic instructions contain some glosses in Greek, which betray that the scribe took inspiration from a *Vorlage* in Greek. In all likelihood, he copied the Greek incantation from this same *Vorlage*, but, out of fear for losing the sounds' intrinsic power, left it untranslated.

> A casting for inspection (*sš-mšt*), which the great god Imhotep \made/.
>
> Its preparation: You bring a stool (*tks* : τραπεσεν) of olive wood having four legs, upon which no man on earth has ever sat, and you put it near you, it being clean. When you wish to make a god's arrival (*pḥ-nṯr*) with it truthfully without falsehood, here is its manner. You should put the stool in a clean niche in the midst of the place, it being near your head; you should cover it with a cloth from its top to its bottom; you should put four bricks under the table before it, one above another, there being a censer of clay before it (i.e. the table); you should put charcoal of olive wood on it; you should add wild goose (*srẖw.t* : χηνα{γ}ριου) fat pounded with myrrh and *ḳs-ꜥnḫ* stone; you should make them into balls; you should put one on the brazier; you should leave the remainder near you; you should recite this spell in Greek to it. Words to be said:
>
> *I call upon you* (*sing.*) *who are seated in impenetrable darkness and are in the midst of the great gods; you who, when you set, take with you the solar rays and send up the light-bringing goddess* NEBOUTOSOUALĒTH*; great god* BARZAN BOUBARZAN NARZAZOUZAN BARZABOUZATH *Helios. Send up to me in this night your archangel* ZEBOURTHAUNĒN*,*

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are *PGM* XII/*PDM* xii: Greek and Demotic; *PDM* xiv/*PGM* XIV: Demotic and Greek; *PGM* LXI/*PDM* lxi: Greek and Demotic (III CE); *PGM* III: Greek and Coptic; *PGM* IV: Greek and Coptic; *PGM* XXXVI: Greek and Coptic (IV CE); *PGM* I: Greek and Coptic (IV or V CE).

85 For further details, see Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 123–26.

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> *respond with truth, truly, not falsely, unambiguously concerning such-and-such a matter, because I conjure you by him who is seated in the fiery cloak on the serpentine head of the Agathos Daimon, the almighty, four-faced, highest demon, dark and conjuring,* PHŌX. *Do not ignore me Do not ignore me, but send up quickly tonight <in accordance with> the command of the god.*
> (*Say this three times*)
> You should lie down without speaking to anyone on earth; and you should go to sleep. You see the god, he being in the likeness of a priest wearing clothes of byssus on his back and wearing sandals on his feet. He speaks with you truthfully with his mouth opposite your mouth concerning anything that you wish. When he has finished, he will go away again. You place a tablet for reading the hours (πίναξ *n ʿš wnwt*) upon the bricks, and you place the stars upon it, and you write your business on a new roll of papyrus, and you place it on the tablet (πίναξ). It tells you your stars, whether they are favorable for your business.
>
> P. London-Leiden ro IV.1–22 = *PDM* xiv.93–114 [*PGM* XIVa.1–11]

The same pattern can be observed in those two cases that a Demotic recipe includes an incantation in Meroitic (P. London-Leiden vo. XX.1–7 [PDM xiv.1097–1101] and P. BM EA 10588 ro. VII.1–5 [PDM lxi.95–99]).[86] In both cases, title and instruction are given in Demotic, while the incantation proper is explicitly labeled as Meroitic and phonetically transcribed in the same reduced set of Demotic characters that was devised specifically to transcribe *voces magicae*.

> Spell of giving praise <and> love in Meroitic (*mt.t ʾlkš*): "SUMUTH KESUTH HRBAQA BRASAKHS LAT son of (?) NAPH son of (?) BAKHA". Say these, put gum on your hand, kiss your shoulder twice, and go before the man whom you desire.
>
> P.BM. 10588 VII.1–5 = PDM lxi.95–99

It remains a question whether the transcribed words represent truly Meroitic (factual bilingualism) or rather gibberish that was meant to sound like Meroitic to an Egyptian hearer (imagined bilingualism). The language has so far not been identified.

In the Greek formularies the relations are reversed. The instructions are always in Greek, but occasionally the incantation is partly or entirely in

86 For more detailed analysis, see Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 138–43.

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Egyptian and transcribed in Greek or Old-Coptic letters.[87] In this short recipe the language division is strictly maintained: the instructions are in Greek, the invocation is in Egyptian.

> Another <encounter spell addressed> to Helios. Having wrapped in linen from head to feet a naked boy, clap your hands and after making a ringing noise, place the boy opposite the sun and say the formula, standing behind him: "*I am* BARBARIŌTH, BARBARIŌTH *am I;* PESKOUT EÏAHO ADŌNAI ALŌAI SABAŌTH, *come inside this lad today, because I am* BARBARIŌTH."
>
> *PGM* IV.88–93

The number of Egyptian loanwords in Greek spells is almost negligible and restricted to religious terms and flora and fauna. The Egyptian loanword for the hoopoe bird is twice provided with a gloss. In one instance, the gloss gives a Greek equivalent; in the other case, the proper Egyptian form is given, which reveals that the reader was expected to be familiar with Egyptian speech or, at least, to be living where Egyptian was spoken.

> Take wormwood, sun opal, breathing stone, and heart of a *kokkouphas*, which is vulture-cock.
>
> *PGM* II.17–18

> Take a *kakouph*[*on*], which is *kakou*[*phat*] in Egyptian, and tear its heart out.
>
> *PGM* III.424–25

Greek loan words occur only in the Demotic spells of P. London-Leiden (*PGM*/*PDM* XIV).[88] Most of them are borrowings from the international pharmacological jargon of the day, which were copied from *Vorlagen* in Greek. The manuscript's reverse side contains a lexicographical section where several terms are translated into Demotic or juxtaposed with their Egyptian equivalent and followed by short identifications in Egyptian also translated from the

87 E.O.D. Love, *Code-Switching with the Gods. The Bilingual* (*Old Coptic-Greek*) *Spells of PGM IV* (*P. Bibliothèque Nationale Supplément Grec. 574*) *and their Linguistic, Religious, and Socio-Cultural Context in Late Roman Egypt*, Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde—Beiheft 4 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

88 For more details, see Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 110–20.

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Greek. The language of the Demotic formularies is otherwise conspicuously free of Greek loanwords and is therefore by no means representative of contemporary Egyptian speech. On the contrary, the Demotic formularies are written in a speech register that is deliberately kept free of Greek influence, and thus continue the standards of the scribal tradition of the Egyptian temple.

Imagined bilingualism, that is, when the text falsely claims to switch into another language, occurs in the Greek formularies only. In the first example, the text does not switch to Aramaic and Hebrew as it claims, but in fact, gives *voces magicae*.

> I am the one who calls upon you, great god, in the Syrian language: ZAALAĒRIPHPHOU. You should not ignore my voice. (in Hebrew: ABLANATHANALBA ABRATHIAŌ)
>
> *PGM* V.473–76

> I know your foreign names (*barbarika onomata*), PHARNATHAR BARACHĒL CHTHA; these are your foreign names.
>
> *PGM* VIII.20–21

The motivation for imagined bilingualism is twofold. First, it is grounded in the belief that the supreme deity is beyond and above ethnic and linguistic divisions and answers to different names in different speech communities: "I call upon you who encompasses everything in every tongue and every dialect" (*PGM* XIII.138–9). Knowledge of the various names amounts to knowing the god's true name and nature and accordingly guarantees sympathy from the deity for the ritualist's request, as illustrated in the conclusion to a ring spell.

> And again I call upon you,
> according to Egyptians, PHNŌEAI IABŌK;
> according to Jews, ADŌNAIE SABAŌTH;
> according to Greeks, "the king of all, ruling alone";
> according to the high priests, "hidden, invisible, overseer of all";
> according to Parthians, OUERTŌ "master of all".
> Consecrate and empower this object for me, for the entire and glorious time of my life!
>
> *PGM* XII.263–67

This discourse mode is not limited to human languages, though. The sounds of animals and nature are equally well suited to supplicate the divine:

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> I call upon you, lord, in birdglyphic: ARAI; in hieroglyphic: LAÏLAM; in Hebrew: ANOCH BIATHIARBATH BERBIR ECHILATOUR BOUPHROUMTROM; in Egyptian: ALDABAEIM; in baboonic: ABRASAX; in falconic: CHI CHI CHI CHI CHI CHI CHI TIPH TIPH TIPH; in hieratic: MENEPHŌÏPHŌTH CHA CHA CHA CHA CHA CHA CHA
>
> *PGM* XIII.81–86, cf. 149–60, 454–70 and 593–98

> I call upon you as you are addressed by the male gods [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as you are addressed by the female gods [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as the winds call <you> [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as the east wind (looking to the east, <say>) [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as the south wind (looking to the south, say) [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as the west wind (looking to the west, say) [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as the north wind (looking to the north, say) [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as the earth (looking to the earth, say) [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as the sky (looking to the sky, say) [*vowel strings*]; I call upon you as the cosmos (looking to the cosmos, say) [*vowel strings*]; fulfil for me the such-and-such matter quickly.
>
> *PGM* XIII. 848–71

Further motivation for imagined bilingualism is the idea that certain languages, due to their antiquity, are better suited than others to address the divine.[89] By including words and phrases supposed to pass for Egyptian, Hebrew, and Aramaic, the formularies expose the aspirations of their producers and consumers to work in the traditions of ancient Egypt and Near East. Appropriating their associated jargon and names of power was furthermore a means to forge a chain of tradition.

4.4 *Authoritative Traditions*

Although of recent origin and radically innovative, the Greco-Egyptian formularies do not at all acknowledge their novel character. On the contrary, they are resolute in claiming ancient pedigrees that are without basis in historical reality. These claims are about the origin of the text, the authenticity of its message, proofs of efficacy, and the guarantee of secrecy.[90] The formation of this imagined authoritative tradition gives us clues as to the social and cultural

89 Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries of Egypt*, VII.4–5 (256–260); *Corpus Hermeticum* XVI.1–2; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.25. See below, Frankfurter, Chapter 22.

90 This section is based on Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 254–80.

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framework in which the practitioners aspired to be working. In this respect, it sheds partial light on the sense of group identity and self-definition of the producers and users of the formularies. Interestingly, the Greek recipes articulate a sense of self-definition that differs from the Demotic recipes.

As regards the origin of the text, some recipes claim to be god-given or are attributed to a famous author; the patron deities are almost exclusively Egyptian. For example, the following two passages claim a divine origin.

> There is nothing greater than this procedure. It was tested by Manetho, [who] received [it] as a gift from Osiris, the greatest god. Perform it, perform it successfully and silently.
>
> *PGM* III. 439–40

> Isis uttered and wrote down [the formula given below], when she took up Osiris and fitted together his disjointed members. When Asklepius [saw] him, he admitted that he [could] not have [fitted together] the de[ceased] (even) with (the help of) Hebe or any[body else].
>
> *PGM* VII.1000–1004

The selection of pseudepigraphic authors was guided by preconceived notions and stereotypes according to which ethnic identity and knowledge of the occult are intimately linked. The authors fall into four types: Egyptian priests, Jewish culture heroes, Persian magoi, and Greek philosophers and holy men. Titles include "A tested charm of Pibechis for those possessed by demons" (*PGM* IV.3007), "From the *Diadem of Moses*" (*PGM* VII.619), "Pythagoras' request for a dream vision and Demokritos' dream divination by astrology" (*PGM* VII.795), "Love binding spell of Astrampsouchos" (*PGM* VIII.1), "Apollonius of Tyana's old serving woman" (*PGM* XIa.1), "The dream sending spell of Zminis from Dendera" (*PGM* XII.121), "Jacob's prayer" (*PGM* XXIIb.1).

Claims to authenticity are packaged as letters sent between a ritualist and his colleague or patron, so as to make the reader believe that he is given access to the knowledge of true *magoi* and champions of old. Take for example this introduction to a divination spell, in which an Egyptian priest writes to king Psammetichus, ruler of Egypt from 664 to 610 BCE—many centuries before Greco-Egyptian ritual techniques came in use.

> Nephotes greets Psammetichus, king of Egypt, who lives forever. As the great god has appointed you eternal king and nature has made (you) the best sage, I too, desirous to demonstrate you the industry in me, have sent you this procedure that, with complete ease, performs a holy action.

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> And after you have tested it, you too will be amazed at the miraculous nature of this operation.
>
> *PGM* IV. 154–62

Alternatively, authenticity can be evoked through testimonies of the text's discovery in an Egyptian temple.[91] This motif presupposes that the text is in fact a translation into Greek from an authentic—and much older, as is implied—Egyptian text. For instance, instructions for a divination procedure, named after the goddess Isis, are presented as if found in the temple of Thoth (Hermes in Greek): "*The Mistress Isis is Great*: copy of a holy book[92] that was found in the treasury of Hermes" [*PGM* XXIVa.1–4]. The following introduction to a list of encoded ingredients paired with their solutions claims that the listing is just such a translation. However, its historically incorrect reference to an Egyptian practice of inscribing such information on temple statues exposes the claim readily as false.[93]

> Interpretations from the temples, in translation, of which the temple scribes made use. Because of the curiosity of the masses, they (the temple scribes) wrote the (names of the) herbs and other things that they made use of on statues of gods in order that they (the masses), since they do not take precautions, do not meddle at all, due to the inevitable result of their mistake. However, we have collected the solutions from many copies, all of them secret.
>
> *PGM* XII.401–7

The passage is not only of interest for its use of the motif of translation, but also for its situation of address, constructing a dichotomy between the world of the Egyptian temple and that of the formularies. The author and implied reader ("we") are bonded in their desire to partake in the practices of the Egyptian priests ("they") and also in realizing that they are not part of that world and have access only through the intermediacy of translation.

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91 For other occurrences, see *Suppl. Mag.* II, 111f; W. Brashear, "Ein Berliner Zauberpapyrus," *ZPE* 33 (1979): 261–78, 266.

92 The phrase "holy book" (*hiera biblos*) is an idiomatic expression in the *PGM* for 'temple book in Egyptian'. Whenever it occurs, translation from Egyptian into Greek is implied; J. Quaegebeur, "Sur la 'loi sacrée' dans l'Égypte gréco-romaine," *Ancient Society* 11–12 (1980–81): 230–34, 233.

93 For further details, especially on the nature of the encoded ingredients, see Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites*, 185–203.

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Claimed evidence of efficacy occurs in the form of interspersed endorsements such as "tested" or "the world has had nothing greater than this" (*PGM* XII.277). The following passage stands out as a very lively example, mimicking an Egyptian narrative format that situates the performance of marvelous feats at the king's court (King's Novel).

> Pakhrates, the high priest of Heliopolis, revealed [it] to the emperor Hadrian, revealing the power of his very own divine magic. For it attracted in one hour; it made someone sick in 2 hours; it destroyed in 7 hours, sent the emperor himself dreams as he thoroughly tested the whole truth of the magic within his power. And marveling at the prophet, he ordered double fees to be given to him.
>
> *PGM* IV.2446–55

Warnings for secrecy occur throughout the recipes.[94] On one level they bear witness to the reality that practicing magic was punishable in the Roman Empire. As a textual strategy, however, they have the dual function of mystifying the recipe and creating a highly productive sense of community between editor and reader.[95] When Nephotes warns king Psammetichus "Let this procedure, O mighty king, be transmitted to you alone, guarded by you, unshared" [*PGM* IV. 254–56], the reader realizes that the editor lets him in on confidential information. Yet, neither editor nor reader was ever supposed to know. They are only indirect descendants in the chain of tradition. Thus they are bonded as a group—yet remain apart from the ritual specialists they wish they were.

These mystification techniques were already common in formularies and manuals from pharaonic Egypt. The scribes of the Greco-Egyptian formularies continued a long-standing scribal tradition. However, they gave the motifs new content and applied them more liberally. Most salient are the international scope of the pseudepigraphic attributions and the objectification of Egyptian clergy. Whenever Egyptian priests are mentioned, they are cast as a professional group distinct from the producers and users of the formularies. In this regard, there is a critical difference between Greek and Demotic recipes. The latter are never framed by means of references to international authors, nor do they objectify Egyptian priests. In fact, of the mystification techniques, Demotic recipes make use only of the motif of proven efficacy. This suggests that they

94 H.D. Betz, "Secrecy in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Secrecy and Concealment. Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, ed. H.G. Kippenberg and G. Stroumsa, Studies in the History of Religions 65 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995) 153–75.

95 For an alternative interpretation, see Gordon, "Reporting the Marvelous," 65–92, 81.

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were composed with a group of users in mind different from the Greek recipes. Apparently, foreign ritual experts and alleged translations of hieroglyphic texts were of no concern to the intended users of the Demotic recipes.

4.5 *Historical Development*

The vast majority of magical papyri date to the second century CE and later. These spells exhibit a relative uniformity in language and ritual techniques, sharing a predilection for invoking deities and demons by long strings of epithets and *voces magicae* and for integrating as much resources of power as possible, including drawings, *charactēres*, and geometrically arranged vowel strings and palindromes. The formularies are all very similar in their layout and make use of a very similar set of technical terms to indicate the types of spells and to describe the procedures. It seems warranted to conclude that, by this period, if not slightly earlier, Greco-Egyptian ritual had established itself as a distinct type and that there was a general awareness of genre rules and standards with respect to the format and content of individual spells and formularies. However, information on the formative period is scant. The number of preserved documents predating the second century CE is low and their state of preservation is poor. In all fairness, they do not allow determining when and how this innovative type of idiom and ritual came into being.

The earliest document of the corpus is *PGM* XL, found in the Serapeum at Memphis and better known today as the 'Curse of Artemisia.' It is dated by paleography to the late fourth century BCE.[96] It is a plea to Oserapis (the deceased or Osiris form of the Apis bull of Memphis) to intervene on Artemisia's behalf and punish her daughter's father for not providing the daughter with a proper burial. In seeking justice in a deadlocked dispute through divine intervention, Artemisia followed an established Egyptian procedure of writing a letter to a god and depositing it in the god's proximity, as in this case in the catacomb of the Apis bulls.[97] The text is testament to the encounter of Greek immigrant society and Egyptian religious and social practices, but, apart from being a translation in Greek of what is otherwise an Egyptian textual format, it does

96 For photo and dating, see R. Seider, *Paläographie der griechischen Papyri* III.1 (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1990) 141–45.

97 For a comprehensive discussion of the genre of 'Letters to Gods', attested in Demotic since the 6th century BCE, see M. Depauw, *The Demotic Letter. A Study of Epistolographic Scribal Traditions against their Intra- and Intercultural Background* (Sommerhausen: G. Zauzich, 2006), 307–13. The so-called 'Prayers for Justice' work on similar principles; H.S. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers," in *Magika Hiera*, 60–106 (see pp. 68–69 for Artemesia's Curse). Similar documents are *Suppl. Mag.* 52 (I CE), PGM LI (III CE) and the Old-Coptic Papyrus Schmidt, *ACM* no. 1 (ca. 100 CE).

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not exhibit any of the features of Greco-Egyptian ritual.[98] Its main relevance lies in signaling the emergence of an immigrant or culturally displaced clientele that is willing, when faced with a life crisis, to adopt, adapt, and combine practices and discourses that had heretofore developed and functioned in separate ethnic and cultural communities.

The next available manuscripts do not predate the first century BCE. Unlike the elaborate handbooks of the imperial period, these early (fragmentary) formularies were apparently collections of relatively short incantations accompanied by succinct ritual instructions. Recipes have one purpose only. Drawings and *charaktēres* are absent, while *voces magicae* do not appear before the first century CE (*PGM* XVI, CIII, *Suppl. Mag.* 52). The deities addressed have either Greek or Egyptian names.

One of the earliest manuscripts, the so-called Philinna Papyrus (*PGM* XX), preserves one column of a collection of short incantations for healing in dactylic hexameters. The verses are labeled *epaoidē*, using the uncontracted poetic form of the word for "charm" since Homer, a term which is otherwise rare in the *PGM*.[99] The second incantation is entitled "[*Epaoidē* of N], a Syrian woman from Gadara, for every inflammation" and the title of the third incantation reads "*Epaoidē* of Philinna from Thessaly for a headache". In their hexametrical form, diction, and shortness they bear strong resemblance to the Bacchic gold tablets (fourth to first century BCE)[100] and the cluster of protective lead tablets from Himera (Sicily; fifth century), Phalasarna (Crete, fourth century), Locri (Calabria, early fourth century), and Selinous (Sicily; fourth century).[101]

98 The deity addressed is Oserapis, the Greek contracted transcription of Osiris-Apis, who otherwise never appears in the *PGM*. The language is not Koine but Ionic Greek interspersed with some Attic features.

99 On epodē as a poetic genre, see H. Pfister, "Epode" *Paulys Real-Enzyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft, Suppl.* 4 (1924) 323–44. On the Greek tradition of hexametrical charms, see C.A. Faraone, "Hexametrical Incantations as Oral and Written Phenomena," in *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy and Religion*. Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World 8, eds. A.P.M.H. Lardinois, J.H. Blok & M.G.M. van der Poel (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 191–204. On their use and function in Greek healing practices, see R. Kotansky, *Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets*, 108–14 and W.D. Furley, "Besprechung und Behandlung. Zur Form und Funktion von EPOIDAI in der griechischen Zaubermedizin," in *Philanthropia kai eusebeia. Fs. Albrecht Dihle*, ed. G.W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 80–104.

100 F. Graf and S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife. Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London: Routledge, 2007).

101 Himera tablet: D. Jordan, "Ephesia Grammata at Himera," *ZPE* 130 (2000): 104–7. Phalasarna tablet: D. Jordan, "The Inscribed Lead tablet from Phalasarna," *ZPE* 94 (1992): 191–94. Lokroi Epizephyrioi: D. Jordan, "Three Texts from Lokroi Epizephyrioi," *ZPE* 130 (2000): 95–103, 96–101. Selinous tablet: D.R. Jordan and R. Kotansky, "Ritual Hexameters in the

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The principle of organization and the alleged female authorship suggest that the collection stands in a Greek tradition of metrical charms rather than represents the innovative trend of Greco-Egyptian private ritual.[102] Influence from Egyptian mythology in the second charm's *historiola* cannot be excluded, however.[103] Moreover, as the incantations are without directions for use, it is quite possible that the collection was conceived as an anthology of poetry rather than as a formulary for practical use.

The transition from Greek to Greco-Egyptian notions and practices can best be observed in a Berlin manuscript of the Augustan period (*PGM* CXXII = *Suppl. Mag*. 72). The collection opens with:

> Excerpt of incantations (*epōidōn*) from the <...> found in Heliopolis in the sacred book called 'Of Hermes' in the innermost sanctuary <written> in Egyptian letters and translated into Greek.

This introduction is innovative in claiming to be a translation of an authentic Egyptian formulary written by Thoth, the god of writing and ritual power *par excellence*, which was kept in the temple library at Heliopolis, the central cult place of the sun god in ancient Egypt. At the same time it retains the term epodē to classify its content. The first incantation is indeed in hexameters and without instructions for use like the incantations of the Philinna Papyrus. The others, however, follow a different format, as they give succinct directions and are composed in prose. Moreover, whereas the first incantation operates on the Greek notion of the apple spell, the others overtly invoke Egyptian mythology and cult.[104] It is therefore tempting to give some credence to the introduction and to regard the incantations as translations or adaptations of Egyptian spells. Whatever metrical form they might have had in Egyptian, it was lost in

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Getty Museum. Preliminary Edition," *ZPE* 178 (2011): 54–62. C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink, eds., *The Getty Hexameters. Poetry, Magic, and Mystery in Ancient Selinous* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

102 C.A. Faraone, "Handbooks and Anthologies: The Collections of Greek and Egyptian Incantations in Late Hellenistic Egypt," *ARG* 2 (2000): 195–214, esp. 209ff.

103 Egyptian mythology: L. Koenen, "Der brennende Horusknabe: Zu einem Zauberspruch des Philinna-Papyrus" *Chronique d'Egypte* 37 (1962): 167–74 and R.K. Ritner, "The Wives of Horus and the Philinna Papyrus (*PGM* XX)," in *Egyptian Religion. The Last Thousand Years*, ed. Willy Clarysse, vol. 2, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 85 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 1027–41. Faraone argues for a combination of Egyptian and Near Eastern influences: C.A. Faraone, "The Mystodokos and the Dark-Eyed Maidens: Multicultural Influences on a Late-Hellenistic Incantation," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 297–333.

104 For apple spells as a type of Greek erotic magic, see C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 69–78.

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translation. To package them for Greek consumption, the translator labeled them *epōidai* and ended each with a variation on the traditional metrical stock phrase "bring to perfection a perfect incantation" (*telei telean epaoidēn*), which occurs twice in the Philinna Papyrus.[105] Thanks to these generic cues, a Greek audience would have recognized the spells as charms, despite their non-Greek form, content, and origin.

These shifts represent defining moments in the development of Greco-Egyptian private ritual. Ritual techniques, textual forms, and mythology of Egyptian, Jewish, and Greek origin were by now combined in spells written in Koine Greek. Verse had lost its relevance as a genre criterion and, accordingly, *epōidē* was eventually replaced by *logos* ("formulation") as the generic term for incantation.[106] Also, the closing verse "bring to perfection a perfect incantation" was marginalized and, when used, was usually rendered in prose.[107] Several formularies of the imperial period still contain metrical sections, some of which are quite extensive with more than 30 or even 100 lines, but these are not descendants of the *epōidē* tradition.[108] Rather, they are cult songs that aim to please the deity addressed by means of their artistic quality so as to persuade him or her to grant the request.[109] They are modeled after the hymns and prayers sung in the context of official cult by a chorus during procession and at the moment of sacrifice.[110] They are yet another example of the corpus' tendency to appropriate, redefine, and 'privatize' practices and discourses of temple cult.

Following these processes of amalgamation and adaptation of older, local traditions, scribes developed new means to capture and mobilize ritual power in writing. The resulting *voces magicae*, name formulae, vowel permutations, and *charaktēres* start to appear on first-century CE manuscripts (P. Oxy. LXV 4468, *PGM* CIII = *Suppl. Mag.* 73, *PGM* XVI), since when they were generic

105 For metrical attestations of this phrase, see *PGM* XX.4, 19 (I BCE), *Suppl. Mag.* 71 fr. 2 + 21 (I BCE); *Suppl. Mag.* 72/*PGM* CXXII.13, 27, 36, 52 (I CE); PGM IV.2939 (IV CE).

106 For an illustrative example of this shift, see *Suppl. Mag.* 88, a fourth century CE formulary from Oxyrhynchus, which contains a reworked version of the *epaoidē* of the Syrian woman on the Phillina Papyrus (*PGM* XX). Instead of *epaoidē*, the incantation is here termed *logos*.

107 For non-metrical attestations of this phrase, see *Suppl. Mag.* 73.18 (I CE); *PGM* VII.992 (III CE); XII.307 (III CE); IV.295 (IV CE); *Suppl. Mag.* 45.53 (V CE).

108 The metrical hymns are usually labeled *eukhē* ("prayer"), occasionally also *logos*.

109 For reconstructed hymns, see *PGM* II, 2nd ed., 237–66; 26 hymns are distinguished. See also Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3420–22.

110 Bortolani, *Magical Hymns from Roman Egypt*; W.D. Furley and J.M. Bremer, *Greek Hymns*, vol. 1, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 47–48.

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features of Greco-Egyptian private ritual.[111] The next stage in the development occurred when scribes started to write Greco-Egyptian spells in their local languages and scripts. The earliest evidence from Egypt dates to the second century CE (Demotic Egyptian, soon to be replaced by Coptic Egyptian), that from Palestine to the fifth century CE (Aramaic and Hebrew).[112]

The oldest extant Egyptian manuscript to exhibit Greco-Egyptian features is P. BM 10808 (Oxyrhynchus; 2nd c. CE).[113] It preserves a column of incantations in Formal Egyptian transcribed into a Greco-Egyptian alphabet next to a large fragment of a preceding column with two recipes in Demotic, one for a *paredros* (transcribed *ꜣngylws* in Demotic characters) and one for dream-sending, that embed the MASKELLI-MASKELLŌ formula and other *voces magicae* in Greek letters. This arrangement demonstrates that, by the second c. CE, Greco-Egyptian idiom and more traditional Egyptian texts were no longer two exclusive categories produced and put to practice in two distinct social and cultural worlds. On the contrary, they exist here side by side: the former incorporated in a Demotic spell, the latter recast in an experimental alphabetic script. The London-Leiden papyri (*PGM*/*PDM* XII and *PDM*/*PGM* XIV) offer the most vivid testimony to this development. Their Demotic spells betray several layers of redaction involving the consultation of both traditional Egyptian materials and Greco-Egyptian formularies. The scribes reworked older Egyptian spells into Demotic, translated Greek instructions into Demotic, and transcribed *voces magicae* from Greek into alphabetic Demotic and a Greco-Egyptian alphabet similar to the one used on P. BM 10808; occasionally the scribes even incorporated a Greek incantation into an otherwise Demotic recipe.

111 Roy Kotansky dates several Greek *lamellae* with *voces magicae* to the first century BCE: *GMA* 48, 39, 36 (all found outside Egypt). If his dating is correct, *voces magicae* were already introduced in the late Hellenistic period.

112 For the Hebrew and Aramaic materials, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 149–83.

113 J. Osing, *Der spätägyptische Papyrus BM 10808*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 33 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1976); V.H. Sederholm, *Papyrus British Museum 10808 and its Cultural and Religious Setting* (Probleme der Ägyptologie 24 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006); J. Dieleman, "Ein spatägyptisches magisches Handbuch: Eine neue PDM oder PGM?," in *Res severa verum gaudia. Fs Zauzich* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 121–8; J.F. Quack, "Review of Sederholm, Papyrus British Museum 10808," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 104 (2009): 27–33; Quack, "The Last Stand? What remains Egyptian in Oxyrhynchus?," in *Problems of Canonicity and Identity Formation in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, ed. G. Barjamovic and K. Ryholt, CNI Publications 43 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2016), 105–126.

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Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER 14

Christian Spells and Manuals from Egypt

Jacques van der Vliet

1 Introduction[1]

Late-antique and early-medieval Christian Egypt, between about 300 and 1200, produced a large corpus of texts, traditionally qualified as 'Coptic magic.' This term can be considered a misnomer in as far as it suggests a confessional link with the present-day Coptic Orthodox Church, which condemns magical practices, and obscures the bilingual character of the corpus, which is written in Greek as well as Coptic. For the sake of convenience, the conventional designation is nevertheless retained here. The texts themselves are witness to a rich variety of ritual and textual practices that developed in the margin of official Church discourse. In religious terms, they attest to both the longevity of traditional, pre-Christian motifs and practices in a largely Christianized society and the astonishingly rapid elaboration of a typically Christian idiom, permeated with the formulae of authoritative Christian liturgy and literature. As a body of early Christian magic, the texts are unparalleled for the richness and variety of their contents as well as for their historical potential. The following pages aim at providing access to the corpus both bibliographically and conceptually.

A somewhat particular place is taken by the small corpus of so-called Old-Coptic texts. Written in archaic forms of Coptic, these are basically pre-Christian in contents and in majority integral part of the late-antique Greek and Demotic magical papyri of the PGM-PDM.[2] Important recent studies by K. Dosoo and E. Love[3] are witness to a renewed interest in the Old-Coptic texts, but they will not be further discussed here.

1 A first draft of this chapter was submitted by Marvin Meyer in 2008. Following Meyer's untimely death, the text was thoroughly revised by Jacques van der Vliet, who alone must be held responsible for its present form. All translations from Greek and Coptic are the author's.

2 These passages are those marked by underscoring in the translations in *GMPT*.

3 K. Dosoo, "Rituals of Apparition in the Theban Magical Library" (PhD diss., Macquarie University, 2014); E.O.D. Love, *Code-Switching with the Gods. The Bilingual (Old Coptic-Greek) Spells of PGM IV (P. Bibliothèque Nationale Supplément Grec. 574) and their Linguistic, Religious, and Socio-Cultural Context in Late Roman Egypt*, Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde, Beihefte 4 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

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2 Past Research, Collections and Tools

As with the Greek magical papyri, interest in Coptic magic arose in Europe in the later 19th century to become a booming subject in the period of the interbellum. A lengthy Coptic ritual for protection, till today known as 'Rossi's Gnostic Treatise,' was published by F. Rossi in 1894.[4] An early publication of a Coptic 'handbook,' the *vade mecum* of an ancient practitioner, was due to W. Pleyte and P. Boeser.[5] W.E. Crum's edition of an important Prayer of the Virgin Mary dates from the same year, 1897.[6] For the Greek part of the corpus, the second volume of K. Preisendanz's *Papyri graecae magicae* (1928–1931) (*PGM*) includes some twenty Christian papyri and ostraca (a few more in the second edition that appeared in 1973–74).[7] For the Coptic material, A.M. Kropp's three volumes of *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*[8] (cited below as *AKZ*) assembled a corpus of 75 texts in a German translation (in vol. 2), providing editions of fifteen of them (in vol. 1).[9] Also in the 1930s, additional collections were published from libraries in Heidelberg,[10] Michigan,[11]

4 F. Rossi, "Di alcuni manoscritti copti che si conservano nella Biblioteca nazionale di Torino," *Memorie della Reale Accademia delle scienze di Torino, scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, 2nd ser., 43: 223–340; 44: 21–70 (1893–94): 21–52; republished: A.M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte* (*AKZ*), vol. 1 (Brussels: Fondation égyptologique reine Élisabeth, 1930–31), 63–78; M. Meyer, *Rossi's "Gnostic" Tractate*, Occasional Papers, Institute for Antiquity and Christianity 13 (Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate School, Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1988).

5 W. Pleyte and P. Boeser, *Manuscrits coptes du Musée d'antiquités des Pays-Bas à Leide* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1897), 441–479.

6 W.E. Crum, "A Coptic palimpsest," *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 19 (1897): 210–218.

7 'Christian' are considered here those texts that are ostensibly Christian in contents and / or used in Christian milieus. The criteria are not always conclusive, however. Cf. W.M. Shandruk, "Christian use of magic in late antique Egypt," *JECS* 20 (2012): 31–57.

8 A.M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, 3 vols (Brussels: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1930–31).

9 Cf. V. Stegemann, "Zur Textgestaltung und Textverständnis koptischer Zaubertexte," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 70 (1934): 125–131.

10 F. Bilabel and A. Grohmann, *Griechische, koptische und arabische Texte sur Religion und religiöse Literatur in Ägyptens Spätzeit*, Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrus-Sammlungen 5 (Heidelberg: Universitätsbibliothek, 1934); cf. H.J. Polotsky, "Zu einigen Heidelberger koptischen Zaubertexten," *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 416–425. Reprint, Polotsky, *Collected Papers*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971), 275–284.

11 W.H. Worrell, "A Coptic Wizard's Hoard," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 46 (1929–1930): 239–262.

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Vienna,[12] and London,[13] not to mention publications of individual items. After World War II, interest waned, even though some important Coptic handbooks were published by É. Chassinat[14] and Kropp.[15] The latter scholar also edited a small papyrus codex containing another Prayer of the Virgin Mary.[16]

The final decades of the twentieth century saw a notable surge in interest in the subject, resulting among others in the publication of the fully indexed *Supplementum magicum* (*Suppl. Mag.*). Supplementing Preisendanz's earlier collection of Greek magical texts, its two volumes present well over twenty Christian texts, but the editors discarded amulets with mere scriptural quotes or Christian prayers and acclamations. These are now listed by T. de Bruyn and J. Dijkstra, counting almost 200 items, not all of them actual amulets, however.[17] An important collection of English translations of both Greek and Coptic texts, with valuable introductions and explanatory notes, appeared in 1994.[18] Major publications of new texts are the Coptic handbooks edited by M. Meyer[19] and

12 V. Stegemann, *Die koptischen Zaubertexte der Sammlung Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer in Wien* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1934), cf. W.C. Till, "Zu den Wiener koptischen Zaubertexten," *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 195–221 and H.J. Polotsky, "Review of V. Stegemann, *Die koptischen Zaubertexte der Sammlung Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer*," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 38 (1935): 88–91. Reprint, Polotsky, *Collected Papers*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971), 285–287.

13 W.E. Crum, "Magical Texts in Coptic," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 20 (1934): 51–53, 195–200.

14 É. Chassinat, *Le manuscrit magique copte no 42573 du Musée égyptien du Caire*, Bibliothèque d'études coptes 4 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1955); cf. J. Drescher, "Review of É. Chassinat, *Le manuscrit magique copte no 42573 du Musée égyptien du Caire*," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 43 (1957): 118–121.

15 A.M. Kropp, *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael* (*vormals P. Heidelberg Inv. Nr. 1686*) (Brussels: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1966).

16 A.M. Kropp, *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos. Ein koptischer Gebetstext aus der Gießener Papyrus-Sammlungen*, Berichte und Arbeiten aus der Universitätsbibliothek Giessen 7 (Giessen: Universitätsbibliothek, 1965).

17 T. de Bruyn and J.H.F. Dijkstra, "Greek amulets and formularies from Egypt containing Christian elements. A checklist of papyri, parchments, ostraka, and tablets," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 48 (2011): 163–216.

18 M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994; Reprint, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

19 M. Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels* (*P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685*)*: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrus-Sammlung, N.F. 9 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996); cf. Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels in English Translation*, Occasional Papers, Institute for Antiquity and Christianity 38 (Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate School, Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1997), Meyer, "The Prayer of Mary who dissolves chains in Coptic magic and religion," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 407–15, Meyer, "The Prayer of Mary in the Magical

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M. Choat and I. Gardner.[20] W. Beltz's (re-)publications of the important material in Berlin regrettably do not meet modern editorial standards.[21] S. Pernigotti produced a selection of Coptic texts in an Italian translation for the monumental handbook *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*,[22] reprinted separately by Pernigotti in 2000.[23] T.S. Richter[24] translated a number of Coptic spells with a traditional, pre-Christian background into German. The same author recently published a useful, but incomplete list of published Coptic texts.[25] As long as no new tools have become available, digital or otherwise, the Meyer & Smith collection of 1994 (cited below as *ACM*) and Kropp's German handbook (*AKZ*) provide the best access to the corpus.

Scholarship during the last century was largely devoted to the editing of texts. The study of these was hampered by the biases of the time, but perhaps even more by the sheer difficulties of reading and interpretation that almost each text poses. The considerable attention for the pre-Christian, Greek magical papyri from Egypt in the early part of the 20th century bore little fruit for the study of the Christian texts. Thus, Th. Hopfner's important monograph

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Book of Mary and the Angels," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. S. Noegel, J. Walker and B. Wheeler, Magic in History (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 57–67, Meyer, "Mary dissolving chains in Coptic Museum Papyrus 4958 and elsewhere," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August–2 September 2000*, ed. M. Immerzeel and J. van der Vliet, vol. 1, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 133 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 369–376; Meyer, "The persistance of ritual in the Magical Book of Mary and the Angels: P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685," in *Practising Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichaean and Other Ancient Literature. Essays in Honor of Birger A. Pearson*, ed. A.D. DeConick, G. Shaw and J.D. Turner, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 85 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013), 359–76.

20 M. Choat and I. Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power* (*P. Macq. I 1*), The Macquarie Papyri 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

21 W. Beltz, "Die koptischen Zauberostraka der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin," *Hallesche Beiträge zur Orientwissenschaft* 2 (1980): 59–75, 103–11; Beltz, "Die koptischen Zauberpergamente der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 29 (1983): 59–86; 30 (1984): 83–104; 31 (1985): 31–41; 32 (1986): 55–66.

22 S. Pernigotti, "La magia copta: i testi," in *ANRW* II, 18.5, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase, (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1995), 3685–3730.

23 S. Pernigotti, *Testi della magia copta*, Piccola biblioteca di egittologia 5 (Imola: Editrice La Mandragora, 2000). Cf. J. van der Vliet, "Review of S. Pernigotti, *Testi della magia copta*," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 62 (2005): 276–279.

24 H.-W. Fischer-Elfert and T.S. Richter, *Altägyptische Zaubersprüche*, Reclams Universal-Bibliothek 18375 (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun. GmbH, 2005), 123–29.

25 T.S. Richter, "Markedness and unmarkedness in Coptic magical writing," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité. Actes du colloque international* (*Liège, 13–15 octobre 2011*), ed. M. de Haro Sanchez, Papyrologica Leodiensia 5 (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2015), 97–108.

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Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber hardly takes note of Christian material.[26] Such studies as appeared were generally focused on the religious or mythological contents and, to a lesser degree, on the ritual mechanics underlying the texts. For the Coptic-language Christian material from Egypt, the third volume of Kropp's *AKZ*. Kropp was not only interested, as a child of his time, in the more or less orthodox (as opposed to Gnostic) contents of the spells and formularies assembled by him, a bias shared by V. Stegemann,[27] but also in the formative influence of Christian liturgy and prayer that he correctly detected in their form and phrasing.[28] The juridical and liturgical antecedents of Christian curses, Greek and Coptic, were discussed in an important monograph by G. Björck in 1938.[29]

For a deeper understanding of ritual mechanics, the work of the anthropologist S.J. Tambiah, which was deeply indebted to the speech-act theory as developed by J.L. Austin and J.R. Searle, proved particularly influential.[30] Tambiah's ideas were introduced into the field by D. Frankfurter's seminal essay on the *historiola*, magical story-telling, published in 1995.[31] The 'performative' approach that characterizes Tambiah's work, with its insistence on the ritual character of magic, strongly shaped subsequent scholarship, including the widely read 1994 collection of *Ancient Christian Magic*, with its telling subtitle *Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*. By the 1990s, Kropp's "Zauberer" (wizard) had become a "ritual specialist."

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26 Th. Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, 2 vols., Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde 21 & 23 (Leipzig: H. Haessel-Verlag, 1921–1924). Reprint, (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1974–1990).

27 V. Stegemann, *Die Gestalt Christi in den koptischen Zaubertexten*, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums und des Mittelalters 1 (Heidelberg: Selbstverlag F. Bilabel, 1934).

28 See especially *AKZ*, vol. 3, 165–244: 'Die magischen Handlungen und Gebete' ('Magical acts and prayers').

29 G. Björck, *Die Fluch des Christen Sabinus. Papyrus upsaliensis 8*, Arbeten utgivna med understöd av Vilhelm Ekmans Universitetsfond, Uppsala 47 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri-A.-B, 1938).

30 S.J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," *Man* 3 (1968): 175–208. Reprint, *Culture, Thought and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1985), 17–59 and Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View," in *Modes of Thought*, ed. R. Horton and R. Finnegan (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 199–229. Reprint, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," *Culture, Thought and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 60–86.

31 D. Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 457–76.

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D. Frankfurter, again, provided important impulses for the social definition of this ritual specialist in his monograph *Religion in Roman Egypt*.[32] There he assigned an important role to local holy men, for Christian Egypt most likely monks, as mediators of ritual expertise and quoted the *däbtära* as a relevant analogy from Christian Ethiopia. The *däbtära* combine widely varying ritual services with scribal knowledge and an ecclesiastical function as a cantor. In a later article, the same scholar proposed an oral model of transmission for the remarkable persistence of pre-Christian motifs in Coptic charms that circulated in Egypt well after the Christianization of the country.[33]

A renewed interest in the reception of authoritative textual models is apparent in various papers by Th. de Bruyn, who pays due attention to biblical and liturgical formulae in the Greek Christian amulets from Egypt.[34] Also recent studies by J.E. Sanzo, J.G. Given, and B.C. Jones[35] focus on the use of canonical and extra-canonical Scripture in amulets, from functional and typological as well as text-critical perspectives. A quite complicated case of transfer of textual authority, involving various literary domains, was studied by J. van der Vliet in the inscriptions of a bishop's tomb at Dongola (in the northern Sudan, but heavily dependent upon Egyptian models).[36] Beyond the typical domain

32 D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

33 D. Frankfurter, "The Laments of Horus in Coptic: Myth, Folklore, and Syncretism in Late Antique Egypt," in *Antike Mythen: Medien, Transformationen und Konstruktionen*, ed. U. Dill and C. Walde (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 229–247.

34 Th. de Bruyn, "The Use of the Sanctus in Christian Greek Papyrus Amulets," in *Studia Patristica* XL, ed. F. Young, M. Edwards and P. Parvis (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006), 15–19 and de Bruyn, "Appeals to Jesus as the One 'Who Heals Every Illness and Every Infirmity' (Matt 4:23, 9:35) in Amulets in Late Antiquity," in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. DiTomasso & L. Turescu, Bible in Ancient Christianity 6 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008), 65–81.

35 J.E. Sanzo, *Scriptural* Incipits *on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), J.G. Given, "Utility and Variance in Late Antique Witnesses to the Abgar-Jesus Correspondence," *ARG* 17 (2015): 187–222 and B.C. Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity* (London: T&T Clark, 2016).

36 J. van der Vliet, "Literature, liturgy, magic: a dynamic continuum," in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi*, ed. P. Buzi and A. Camplani, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 125 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011), 555–574; for the ensemble, see now A. Łajtar and J. van der Vliet, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia. The Texts from a Medieval Funerary Complex in Dongola*, Supplements of The Journal of Juristic Papyrology 32 (Warsaw: Warsaw University, 2017).

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of 'magic,' but of related interest, is the discussion of Christian oracular practices by A. Luijendijk.[37]

Finally, important conferences took place in the 1990s in Lawrence, Kansas[38] and Orange, California.[39] where Coptic material received due attention. Also various later conferences on ancient magic and related themes had papers on Christian Egypt, such as those held in Rome in 2009[40] and in Liège in 2011,[41] focusing on magical texts as written artifacts. During the international Coptic congresses of 2008 (in Cairo) and 2016 (in Claremont, Cal.), specialist panels devoted to magic addressed questions of, respectively, the textualization of magic and the presumed role of monks as brokers of ritual expertise.

3 Nature and Limits of the Corpus

The term 'corpus,' used here in a loose sense, is a misleading one. Although several sizeable handbooks and collections are known, most of the texts survive as scattered archaeological artifacts, in a varying degree of completeness and legibility, and difficult to date with any precision. Almost without exception, the artifacts lack a known provenance and contain little clues to their original context. They show great variety in medium, genre, format, size, contents and purpose. Some, for instance, are personalized amulets produced on order for an often named client, others are model texts or multipurpose handbooks, compiled for use by otherwise unknown practitioners. They come, moreover, as was stated before, in two different languages and stem from different periods in time. In what follows we will briefly discuss the limits and the character of this so-called corpus.

The texts that make up the corpus survive in the two written languages of late antique Egypt, Greek and Coptic (in any of its varieties). As far as the Christian material are concerned, the linguistic divide does not reflect major cultural differences and there is little justification in sticking to a linguistic dichotomy that is imposed mostly by antiquated academic habits. The fact that the Greek part of the corpus preserves relatively more early amulets and the Coptic

37 A. Luijendijk, *Forbidden Oracles? The Gospel of the Lots of Mary*, Studien zu Antike und Christentum 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

38 Meyer and Mirecki, *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*.

39 Mirecki and Meyer, *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*.

40 M. Piranomonte and F.M. Simón, eds., *Contesti magici / Contextos mágicos* (Rome: De Luca editori d'arte, 2012).

41 De Haro Sanchez, *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*.

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more late prayers and handbooks is best explained as a chronological development due to the rise to prominence of Coptic at the expense of Greek from the seventh century onwards. Individual texts, such as the Manichaean spell from Kellis, quoted below, as well as collections, such as the codex Michigan 136, may be bilingual.[42] Even beyond this bilingualism, there is considerable overlap between Greek and Coptic. Greek texts on papyrus may have close analogies in Coptic ones.[43] A Prayer of the Virgin Mary, belonging to a type that was deemed typically Coptic,[44] has been discovered in its probably original Greek form in a medieval tomb in Dongola, in Nubia.[45] The oldest version of a Prayer of Saint Gregory the Wonderworker, known from several medieval Greek manuscripts,[46] is found in a sixth/seventh-century Sahidic Coptic handbook now in Leiden.[47]

Chronologically, there is hardly a time gap between the much more famous pre-Christian corpus of the PGM-PDM and the Christian corpus. Both, moreover, share the same regional background (mostly Upper-Egypt) and use much the same languages (only Demotic is no more found in Christian contexts). Traditional ritual and textual devices continued to be productive, as witnessed for instance by the lasting popularity of vowel series, wing figures, *charaktēres* and certain powerful names and formulae. An entire category of Coptic charms can be thematically and formally linked to older, pre-Christian models, such as those that draw upon Isis-Horus narratives. Yet there is a noticeable difference in spirit and background. The extensive rituals for divination and dream visions that characterize many of the pre-Christian handbooks are notably absent. The Christian corpus, by contrast, is almost exclusively geared towards everyday, practical situations, involving health and safety, business, sex and social relations.

In particular, in spite of absorbing a wide variety of traditional elements, the corpus is a basically Christian one. Coptic magic, in the sense the term is used here, is not a superficially Christianized survival of pagan practices but a Christian phenomenon, feeding on the normative discourse of Christian liturgy, literature and, in general, scribal culture as well as Christian forms of

42 W.H. Worrell, "Coptic Magical and Medical Texts," *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 17–37.

43 Thus, for instance, the hymn to the sun in M. Cohn, "*P. Mich.* 3404 recto: An Unpublished Magical Papyrus," *ZPE* 182 (2012): 243–57.

44 Th. de Bruyn, "Greek Amulets from Egypt Invoking Mary as Expressions of "Lived Religion"." *Journal of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies* 3–4 (2012): 60–61.

45 Edited in Łajtar and van der Vliet, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*.

46 A. Strittmatter, "Ein griechisches Exorcismusbüchlein: Ms. Car. C 143b der Zentralbibliothek in Zürich," *Oriens Christianus* 20 (1930–1932): 11, 141–144; cf. 1, 178.

47 Pleyte and Boeser, *Manuscrits coptes du Musée d'antiquités des Pays-Bas à Leide*, 441–454.

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piety.[48] This can be observed right from the outset. Already the fourth-century bilingual spell from a Manichaean letter, discussed below, shows a developed Christian format, stamped by biblical and liturgical language.

At the other end of the chronological scale, late antique ritual practices survived until well into medieval times and occasionally through today, sometimes even in Jewish and Islamic contexts. An interesting case in question are manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza that bear witness to the transmission of Coptic spells in the cosmopolitan, multilingual (Greek, Coptic, Hebrew, Arabic) setting of medieval Cairo.[49] Still in the medieval period, texts of Egyptian origin found their way into Nubia (in Greek or Sahidic Coptic) and Ethiopia (in Ge'ez, usually via Arabic). Even today, ritual texts that bear a clear late antique stamp, such as the so-called Prayer of the Virgin *ad Bartos*, the conventional designation of a lengthy ritual for deliverance and healing purportedly first pronounced by Mary in the (unidentified) city of Bartos,[50] are in use in Ethiopia[51] and in Egypt itself.[52]

In addition to linguistic diversity, there is also material diversity. Texts are found on papyrus, parchment, ostraca and, more rarely, lead lamellae, bones and wooden boards.[53] For later ones, from the ninth century onwards, paper replaces papyrus. Ostraca (potsherds or limestone flakes) impose obvious limitations for storage and consultation, but allow forms of ritual manipulation different than papyrus (such as fumigation or burial). Due to their specific associations with death and the underworld, bones and lead lamellae were a privileged medium for curses. Paper, parchment and papyrus were used for both small amulets and larger collections or handbooks, which often took the form of a small codex (a bound book in quires). The diversity in purpose, genre, ritual methods and textual substance was even greater, as will be exemplified below.

Faced with such diversity, one may wonder what the criteria were that guided the scholars who compiled the collections of Coptic magic mentioned above. This question becomes even more urgent when it comes to drawing

48 Van der Vliet, "Review of S. Pernigotti."

49 G. Bohak, "Greek, Coptic, and Jewish Magic in the Cairo Genizah," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 36 (1999): 27–44; W.E. Crum, "A Bilingual Charm," *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 24 (1902): 329–31; 25 (1903): 89.

50 Cf. Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels*, 58–59.

51 R. Basset, *Les apocryphes éthiopiens traduits en français*, V. *Les prières de la Vierge à Bartos et au Golgotha* (Paris: Librairie de l'art indépendant, 1895; Reprint, Milan: Archè, 1999), 157–221.

52 G. Viaud, *Magie et coutumes populaires chez les Coptes d'Égypte*, Le soleil dans le coeur 12 (Sisteron: Éditions Présence, 1978), 75–78.

53 Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness in Coptic Magical Writing," 86–88.

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a line between what might be magic and what may be called practical piety. When, in other words, does the Lord's Prayer copied on a potsherd or a papyrus slip become magic? In the absence of opportunities for participatory observation, the answers to these questions must remain largely arbitrary and criteria intuitive. What unites the corpus is primarily a ritual way of solving problems, of what we may call crisis management, that transcends the standard ritual solutions offered by the Church, for instance in the sacraments. The ritual action may consist either in the manipulation of written text (for instance by wearing or burying it) or in the performance of a more complex set of gestures and/or utterances as prescribed in the text. In the latter case, the text may contain a *praxis*, a set of ritual prescriptions, as well as drawings or signs that need to be copied and manipulated. In all cases, however, we are dealing with textualized forms of ritual problem solving, which in a varying degree are marked by distinctive scribal formats and textual strategies.

This criterion of otherness vis-à-vis an ecclesiastical standard has the disadvantage of being a negative criterion, begging the question what the precise relation between the normative and the non-normative may have been. Can such a distinction be made at all? In any case, it is highly unlikely that the texts of the corpus were perceived by the practitioners themselves and their clients, that is from an "emic" point of view, as magic. Many of the texts were even written with the express purpose of counteracting *mageia, hik* or whatever kind of ritual behavior was believed to be harmful.[54] Also the obsolete distinction between 'white' and 'black' magic does not apply. Defensive and aggressive spells were copied by the same practitioners for the same audiences.[55] More seriously, the demarcation line between ecclesiastical problem-solving ritual and so-called magical ritual cannot always be sharply drawn. Prayers (falsely) attributed to famous saints, similar to those found in the Egyptian magical corpus, came to be incorporated into the official *Euchologion* (Book of Prayers) of the Greek Church.[56] Similarly, a weird ritual against hydrophobia, the Prayer of Abu Tarabu, is till today found in the liturgical books of the Coptic Orthodox Church.[57]

54 See above, Chapter 11.

55 See, for a striking example, the double spell in Bilabel and Grohmann, *Griechische, koptische und arabische Texte sur Religion und religiöse Literatur in Ägyptens Spätzeit*, 400–404; *ACM* no. 105.

56 Cf. Th. Schermann, "Die griechischen Kyprianosgebete," *Oriens Christianus* 3 (1903): 302–323 and Schermann, *Spätgriechische Zauber- und Volksgebete: Ihre Überlieferung*, (Phd diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität) (Leipzig: Robert Noske, 1919).

57 Cf. G. Viaud, *Magie et coutumes populaires chez les Coptes d'Égypte*, 87–89.

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Sticking to a criterion of 'otherness', however, has the great advantage of addressing text and artifact on their own terms. In other words, it favors an otherness on the level of the textualization (and materialization) of the rituals. This implies that Coptic texts and artifacts are not classed as magical on the basis of a theoretical conception of what 'magic' is or is not, but on the basis of varying degrees of markedness that assign them to a category of their own that is different from (for instance) service books, literary manuscripts, or so-called documentary texts (most notably school-texts and similar mnemonic tools). In other words, they attest to specific textual practices. We will return to these questions at the end of this essay. For the time being, we retain the notion of a bilingual corpus of ritual texts and artifacts from late antique and early medieval Egypt that is predominantly Christian in character, but otherwise diverse, de-contextualized, fluid and ill-defined, yet nonetheless sufficiently distinct to be studied in its own rights.

4 Genres and Textual Strategies

The major spheres of life for which our texts were written are undoubtedly those of health and well-being and success in sex and business. These major domains could each be served by a wide variety of ritual and textual strategies, ranging from the fabrication of a simple amulet consisting of a strip of papyrus with a scriptural quotation to the performance of a complicated ritual, accompanied by lengthy invocations of celestial beings and entities. It is impossible to illustrate this entire variety here. Instead, we will try to distinguish some significant and characteristic genres and describe some of the more salient textual strategies employed by these various genres.

An important distinction that has already been made above is that between amulets prepared for one-time use by a particular client and 'master spells' that serve as a model for the performance of a ritual, which may or may not include the confection of an amulet. The handbooks, already mentioned above, are often collections of master spells, assembled for multiple use. As a rule, master spells leave the name of the client open (using a formula that is most often rendered as N.N., N. or 'so-and-so' in modern translations).

Such a master spell is the *diakopos*, or separation ritual, that is copied in a letter from a correspondence between Manichaeans, discovered during excavations in ancient Kellis, now Ismant al-Kharab in the Dakhla Oasis, already referred to above.[58] It deserves to be quoted in full here, as the text is interesting

58 I. Gardner, A. Alcock, and W.P. Funk, *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis*, vol. 1, Dakhleh Oasis Project, Monograph 9 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1999), 224–28; cf. P. Mirecki, I. Gardner,

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in various respects. First, the copy can be dated with considerable precision to around the 360s or slightly after, which is rare with such ritual texts. Secondly, in spite of its fairly early date, it shows the pervasive influence of Christian or Christianized ritual speech, in particular in its use of liturgical prayer formulae. Finally, it perfectly illustrates the mechanisms of the ritual procedure. The text is bilingual, partly in Greek and partly in Coptic, and is quoted here with emphases (*italics*) and paragraph marking that I have added in order to bring out the intricate and sophisticated structure of the text (note that some words are lacking or unknown):

1. [Greek] I invoke you:
The one who is from the beginning!
The one who is seated above the Cherubim and the Seraphim!
2. [Coptic] The one who governs *disputes* and *quarrels*!
The one who has calmed down the *winds* through his great power![59]
Just as you made the land of Egypt dominant
and cast *quarrels* over the Chaldeans … ![60]
3*. It is over you (plur.) that I utter these names:
3A. You, O dung (?) of the *black* …,
may the heart of N.N., the son of N.N., and <N.N., the daughter of N.N.>, become *black* towards each other!
3B. O … natron from Arabia,
just as you can *wash away* everything,
(thus) you shall *wash away* the desire that exists between them for each other!
3C. And you, O *burning* of the mustard,
you shall put into their heart *burning* and scorching for each other!
3**. The house in which I will deposit you, you shall not come out of it without having instigated *dispute* and *quarrel* and *thunder* between N.N. and N.N.
4. You shall utter these words over them (i.e. the ingredients).
5. Finished.

The spell consists of five parts, numbered 1 to 5 here. The opening formula of our first part is a liturgical-style invocation of the biblical God, of a type

and A. Alcock, "Magical Spell, Manichaean Letter," in *Emerging from Darkness: Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources*, ed. P. Mirecki and J. BeDuhn, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 43 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 1–32.

59 Cf. Matt. 8:26.

60 Cf. Jer. 37:5.

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familiar from the Psalms as well as the *PGM*. It serves as a label for the entire spell, marking it for genre (an invocation) and sacredness, highlighted by the use of a distinct linguistic code, Greek (Coptic at the time was not yet a liturgical language). Our Part Five is a more overtly paratextual element, signaling the end of the spell also by graphical means (spaces). Following the general opening invocation of Part One, Part Two consists of a series of invocations of the Godhead in Coptic that specifically refer to his power over the elements, in particular the winds, and over disputes and quarrels. They adhere to a widespread type of liturgical prayer known as *Paradigmengebet* (paradigmatic prayer), which cites specific biblical instances of divine intervention in order to ask for similar intervention in an analogous situation here and now. The paradigms serve, in fact, as miniature *historiolae*. In this spell, God is invoked as a master over winds and quarrels in the past in order to raise winds and quarrels also in the present, between a man and woman whose names are left open in the text ("N.N.").

Part Three is of an entirely different nature but also obeys the basic principle of analogy. Its core (3A, B, C) again consists of invocations, now addressing three ingredients with conspicuous material qualities, and demands the application of these qualities by way of analogy to the situation of the couple that should be divorced. In the framing statements marked 3* and 3**, the reciter—in a sense—comments upon his own performance, reaching the climax of the spell in the emphatic statement of the desired effect of the ritual in 3**. Through the ritual, the very qualities of blackness, corrosiveness and burning inherent in the prescribed ingredients are transferred to the relationship between the victims.

The metatextual Part Four contains instructions for the performance of the ritual that makes the ritual work. The "you" is now the performer who should pronounce the preceding spell ("these words") over the three ingredients, which subsequently must be placed within the house of the victims (according to 3**). Such instructions occur in many spells of Coptic magic and are often called *praxis*, the practical part of the ritual. They can be quite elaborate, involving a variety of ingredients.

The choice of the ingredients for the ritual is not, as the spell from Kellis shows, determined by folkloristic knowledge of the supposed therapeutic qualities of certain herbs and minerals, but by their symbolic properties, which must serve the principle of analogy underlying the logic of the ritual. This is why lead, which traditionally had chthonic and negative associations, is often used in curses, in particular to rouse the spirits of the underworld.[61] In general,

61 For a Coptic example, see *ACM* no. 96.

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magic has very little to do with folk medicine, but rather with the ritual manipulation of symbolic properties, and there is little overlap with ancient medical literature, which had its own textual formats.[62]

In many other Coptic spells, the ritual includes a burnt offering (briefly called *thysia*), using specified ingredients, and sometimes the preparation of a potion, a "chalice." In rituals that more closely adhere to ecclesiastical practices, simply water and / or oil may be the preferential ingredients. The ritual can involve also the production of a drawing (*zoidion*). The prescribed drawings, irrespective whether they depict saints, angels, or demons, are characterized by a distinctive style of their own. Both the *praxeis* and their ingredients and the drawings still await systematic study. As an example, here follows the extensive and reasonably clear *praxis* of a spell for a good singing voice, written below the drawing of, presumably, the celestial singer-angel Davithea / David, who holds his "spiritual guitar":

> You shall write the amulets with real honey, undiluted, unheated, on a shard of alabaster. Wash them off with white wine. White grapes—21. Wild mastic—21. *Kankarippos*.
>
> To recite towards the east (in) a white robe.
>
> Burnt offering: wild frankincense, wild mastic, fruit of the myrrh-tree in its entirety.[63]

It is among the 'model texts' that some of the most characteristic products of Coptic magic are counted. These are long ritual texts with a complicated structure, which may be part of handbooks, usually miniature codices, or small collections of separate rituals.[64] In several of the handbooks (for instance, in the recently published Macquarie Codex) a lengthy ritual text precedes a series of 'cases' for the application of the ritual.[65] The technical term for the spell itself, is *apologia*, "incantation," a term encountered in this technical sense also in Coptic Gnostic texts. The instructions for the practical application of

62 Studied, for the Greek papyri, by M.H. Marganne, "La médecine dans l'Égypte romaine: les sources et les methods," in *ANRW* II, 37.3, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1996), 2709–2740; for the Coptic, see W.C. Till, *Die Arzneikunde der Kopten* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1951); but cf. Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness in Coptic Magical Writing," 94–96.

63 *AKZ* I, 31; *ACM* no. 129.

64 E.g. *ACM* nos. 129–132. Designations such as 'cookbook', 'grimoire' or 'wizard's hoard', which are still found in the literature, are better avoided.

65 Choat and Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*.

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the spell are usually kept very brief. The series of 27 numbered cases in the Macquarie Codex begins thus:

1. (For) someone who is possessed: (say) the spell over linseed oil and pitch. Anoint them.
2. For any sickness: (say) the spell over Spanish oil and gum ammoniac. Burnt offering. Anoint them, anoint them.
3. (For) someone who is annoyed with you: write the names of the right side and the left side and the kin of (the angel) Eremiel. Write two injunctions (with) myrrh ink. (Say) the spell over them and (sprinkle?) some water. Before he has (come) to his door, bury one at his door; bind one to your right forearm with a strip.[66]

As can be seen, such 'instructions for use' provide an interesting panorama of daily-life situations for which supernatural intervention, as brokered by the practitioner who owned the handbook, was deemed desirable.

The most typical form taken by the spells themselves, long or short, is that of a prayer, for which the Greek terms *eukhe* or *proseukhe* may be used. As these terms suggest, the texts are entirely geared towards life oral performance, involving invocations and adjurations, hymn-like passages, strings of names, vowel series and frequent repetitions. Parts of the texts, such as the vowel series, must have been sung, while others were quite likely metrically organized. These and other stylistic and ritual devices still await thorough study. The prayers address supernatural powers, the Godhead himself under one of his designations, some of them quite enigmatic (such as Bathuriel or Baktiotha),[67] a saint or one or more angels or demons, the latter most often in case of curses, separation spells and similar.[68] In a typical format, the spell invokes a power, summing up a certain number of his names and attributes, adjuring him by other supernatural entities, then states the purpose of the spell and re-iterates the request in a more pressing form, to end with a typical formula of urgency, such as "(perform this) quick, quick, now, now!" A clear and succinct example is the "ghost trap" from Vienna, the text of which is written in the form of a

66 Choat and Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, 66–68.

67 For the first, see Łajtar and van der Vliet, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 158–61; for the second, K. Dosoo, "Baktiotha: the origin of a magical name in P. Macq. I 1," in *Coptic Society, Literature and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. P. Buzi, A. Camplani, and F. Contardi, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 246, vol. 2 (Louvain; Paris; Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2016), 1237–44.

68 See D. Frankfurter, "Demon Invocations in the Coptic Magical Spells," in *Actes du huitième Congrès international d'études coptes, Paris, 28 juin–3 juillet 2004*, ed. N. Bosson and A. Boud'hors, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 163, vol. 2 (Leuven; Paris; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007), 453–66.

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spiral beginning in the center. It invokes the angel of Egypt, Rufus, in order to get a stolen vessel back and punish the thief.

> I adjure you today, Rufus, the angel who is appointed over the land of Egypt, that you spread your wings over any place where this brass vessel may be, so that you return it to the place from where it came: the east and the west, the north and the sea.
>
> When it is buried below the earth, may you reveal it. When it is hidden at an inaccessible (?) spot, may you return it to its place.
>
> As for him who took it, let not the earth be firm under him, let not the heaven shelter him and do not allow him to get any rest at all.
>
> Yea, yea, quick, quick, quick![69]

A prayer may contain one or more *historiolae*, magical stories, that strengthen the argument and provide authoritative historical or mythical precedents on the basis of the principle of analogy.[70] Prayers could be given additional authority by attributing them to well-known saints. These could be either central figures in Christian piety, such as the Virgin Mary, the Archangel Michael (see below) and Severus of Antioch, the sixth-century champion of miaphysite orthodoxy,[71] or ritual specialists themselves, such a Gregory Thaumaturgus (the Wonderworker, ca. 213–275, mentioned above) and the legendary Cyprian of Antioch, a converted wizard (see below). The story of the saint as known from the liturgical calendar served as a kind of *historiola* that could merely be alluded to in order to guarantee the spell's efficacy.

One such Prayer of the Virgin Mary can be followed through a complicated textual transmission from its composition in Egypt in—most likely—the later fifth century to its latest version in the burial vault of a Nubian bishop who died in 1113. There it is set together with other traditional elements in the frame of a longer composite prayer text, still attributed as a whole to the Virgin Mary.[72]

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69 V. Stegemann, *Die koptischen Zaubertexte der Sammlung Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer in Wien*, 82–84, with pl. II, 1; *ACM* no. 112.

70 See D. Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 457–76, and below, Frankfurter, Chapter 22.

71 C. Römer, "Gebet und Bannzauber des Severus von Antiochia gegen den Biss giftiger Tiere, oder: Maltomini hatte Recht," *ZPE* 168 (2009): 209–12.

72 Kropp (*AKZ* II, no. XL, and 1965) and, after him, Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels* and later titles erroneously called this the Prayer of Mary *ad Bartos*. The latter, however, is a closely related but different prayer, also attributed to the Virgin Mary and known in Coptic (Crum, "A Coptic Palimpsest," 210–18; *AKZ* II, no. XXXIX) as well as Ethiopic and Arabic (see above, p. 330).

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Although the prayer underwent many editorial changes over the centuries, its basic textual form and is largely episodic structure were remarkably well preserved. The (Greek) version from Nubia begins thus, with the opening paragraphs, actually a miniature dialogue, serving as a summary *historiola*:

> The Lord said to his mother, full of grace: "Ask me and I will give you on account of this holy prayer. You are praised in eternity. I will subject to you, mother, all powers of the adversaries."
>
> And Mary raised her eyes to the heavens, towards God, her only-begotten son, saying: "I praise you, who are in eternity, who are above all clouds of heaven and judge the entire race of men, so that heaven will be for you a throne and the earth a footstool for your feet! Eloi, great god of the Hebrews! Let all things be subject to me.
>
> I am Maria, the mother of life. I am Maria<m>, the mother of the light of the entire world. Let the rock split before me, let iron dissolve, and let demons retreat before me."[73]

The same self-identification of Mary occurs in the so-called Prayer of Mary *ad Bartos*[74] and in the beginning of the long prayer of the Macquarie Codex and its parallels: for instance, in the London Papyrus Or. 5987, l. 11–13,

> I am Maria in the visible world, Mariam in the invisible world. I am the mother who gave birth to the true light.[75]

These details suggest that the latter prayers claim the authority of the Virgin Mary as a reciting voice, even though in the case of the Macquarie Codex she shares this honor with a number of others, such as King Solomon and the Archangel Michael. The characteristic "I am"-statements allow the ritualist to step into a variety of supernatural roles. In the procedure, the desire for optimal ritual efficacy may prevail over the logic of carefully constructed ritual authority.

The authority of the reciting voice is very carefully constructed in an erotic spell from Heidelberg, attributed to Cyprian of Antioch, which draws

73 Łajtar and van der Vliet, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 87, 102 and 142–49, where also the Coptic parallel versions are quoted, among them *AKZ* I, G / *ACM* no. 131 and Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels*, 10–24.

74 Coptic: Crum, "A Coptic Palimpsest," 211; *AKZ* II, 128.

75 *AKZ* I, D; *ACM* no. 70; Choat and Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, 107–114, at 107. The Gnostic interpretation proposed by Choat and Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, 12–13 is unlikely, however.

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extensively on the story of the early career of Cyprian as a magician.[76] The opening lines make Cyprian himself recount briefly, in a few nicely phrased verses, the story of his life and his decisive failure to conquer the heart of the pious virgin Justina:

> I know that everything has passed me by. Change has occurred in my soul; change has occurred in my nature. Bitterness overtook my feelings. I changed color; I shuddered in my flesh. The hair of my head rose on end (?). I became full of fire. I went to bed without finding sleep; I rose without having found rest. I ate and drank in sorrow and sighing. I found rest neither in my soul nor in my spirit because of the excess of my desire. My wisdom obscured, my strength grew weak. I failed in my art.
>
> I am Cyprian, the great *magos*, who befriended the dragon of the abyss. He called me: "my son"; I called him father. He set his crown and his diadem upon my head. I suckled the milk of his right breast. He made me sit at his right hand and subjected his entire power to me. I mounted the Pleiades and they sailed beneath me like a boat. I learned the whispering of the stars and I obtained power over the storerooms of the winds. I got knowledge of the whole of astronomy.
>
> All these things passed me by, because of a virgin named Justina. She made my strength and the strength of Satan resemble a sparrow in a children's hand.

Cyprian then realizes the superior power of God, but instead of converting—as he does in the hagiographical tradition—he challenges God in order to make him send Gabriel "the great fire-flaming minister" who should fill the coveted woman with devastating love and desire. The remainder of the text then consists of a long series of adjurations of Gabriel, alternately entreating and menacing him and marked by an ever intensifying urgency.

The 'Prayer of Cyprian,' if it can be called this, is exceptional for the artful way of using the (fictional) biography of Cyprian in constructing the authority of the text. By painting Cyprian's despair, it rouses the empathy of the client, the lover for whom the spell was composed. At the same time, it creates a vivid image of Cyprian as the expert in the field, "the great *magos*", who in the end

76 Bilabel and Grohmann, *Griechische, koptische und arabische Texte sur Religion und religiöse Literatur in Ägyptens Spätzeit*, 304–25; *ACM* no. 73. The best guide to the rich literary traditions about Cyprian remains L. Krestan and A. Hermann, "Cyprianus II (Magier)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 3 (1957): 467–77; for the much different Greek Cyprian prayers, see Th. Schermann, "Die griechischen Kyprianosgebete."

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does not resign but simply changes his allegiance. His superior ritual knowledge that made him first sail the Pleiades is now focused on obtaining the assistance of the angelic messenger Gabriel.

The Prayer of Cyprian is less exceptional in its overall ritual structure. Together with the Dongola Prayer of the Virgin and the spell of the Macquarie Codex, both quoted earlier, it belongs to a greater class of lengthy compositions that assault the supernatural world with a sophisticated array of textual means. In addition to the normative liturgy of the Church, they draw upon a variety of biblical, apocryphal and hagiographic sources, not all of which have been convincingly identified. The resulting compositions consist of long, episodic liturgies that in various cases unfold a kind of virtual map of the celestial world upon which an endless and often bizarre series of supernatural entities is plotted. The common form in which this is done is by means of formulae of adjuration that construct the authority of the practitioner through his knowledge of the names, functions and hierarchies of the celestial world. Particularly sophisticated examples are the spells of handbooks such as the Macquarie Codex and the Heidelberg *Praise of the Archangel Michael*.[77]

The latter text, the title of which is preserved in the original, claims the authority of Michael himself, who appears in a role that is familiar from the many Coptic homilies devoted to the cult of the archangel, placing himself before the throne of God to implore his mercy in favor of mankind:

> Michael did obeisance to the feet of the good Father. He stood upright, planted his wand before him and left his chariot behind him. He stretched out his wings of light and called out, saying: …

What follows is indeed a song of praise, interspersed with narrative passages, prayers and, in particular, long series of adjurations that evoke a vivid picture of the celestial world and even the Godhead himself in all his glory, as the following sample shows:

> I adjure you today by the great golden base, upon which your throne is raised.
>
> I adjure you today by the golden pair of sandals that are on your feet, the name of which is Batha.
>
> I adjure you today by the golden support that is on top of your throne, to wit Thiel.

77 Kropp, *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael*; ACM no. 135.

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> I adjure you today by the great purple robe, the name of which is Mariel.
>
> I adjure you today by the garment of light that clothes you, the name of which is Thoel.
>
> I adjure you today by the great book in your hand that bears the seven seals (cf. Rev. 5:1) and in which the ordinance of what is in heavens and what is on earth is inscribed.
>
> I adjure you today by your exalted arm that grasps the foundations of the earth and the gates of heaven.
>
> I adjure you today by the glory of the light of our two eyes, Thol and Thoran (etc., etc.)[78]

The Macquarie Codex and similar compositions introduce snatches of celestial topography, partly mirroring terrestrial realities:

> (You), whose name is Tauithe (i.e. Davithe), you are the origin, the mother of all origins; you are the father of the twenty-thousand angels and archangels. It is you who are appointed over the tree that grows on the shore of the river Euphrates, where there is the great eagle whose front is lion-faced and whose back is bear-faced and who pleads for the souls of the humans, twelve times a day, until they shall be given rest. When he flies out, his wings are about an *aroura* (about 2.700m^2); when he rests, his dwelling-place is an *aroura*. His flying and his resting are in Kabaon AKB Kabatha. Indeed, his true name is Kabaon.[79]

Naming the supernatural and plotting it upon a map places the practitioner in a position of authority vis-à-vis the divine or angelic powers he wants to address, but also vis-à-vis the client who can hardly hope ever to attain a similar level of technical knowledge. This observation may seem obvious. Yet it raises fundamental questions concerning the identity of performers and audiences, not to mention the nature of the performances themselves. Some of the Coptic liturgies are so demanding that one wonders by whom they were conceived and understood and in which contexts they were performed.

Since a similar interest in celestial topography and similar procedures of mapping and naming the divine can also be observed in a number of Gnostic texts, in particular so-called Sethian texts, such as the *Apocryphon of John* or the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, it is not astonishing that Gnostic influence has

78 Kropp, *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael*, 27; ACM, 330–31.

79 Choat and Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, 54–56.

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been claimed precisely for this class of Coptic 'magical liturgies'. This attribution was offered by Kropp already in the 1930s and, very recently, again by Choat and Gardner for the Macquarie Codex that they published in 2013. The attribution is by no means far-fetched, given that (for instance) the Four Luminaries, Harmozel, Oroiael, Daveithe and Eleleth (already known from Irenaeus of Lyons' second-century Gnostic source), are found only in Sethian Gnostic sources and such Coptic magical rituals. For the Macquarie handbook, the case of Gnostic influence may seem particularly strong. It is, in fact, the first non-Gnostic text where the female divine figure of Barbelo is mentioned. The opening invocations appeal to the celestial Jesus as:

> Christ who lives in heaven, the one who was begotten at the right side of the Father—it was Barbelo, the living Wisdom, who was filled from the two loins of the Father and has begotten for us a perfect living man. He was sent for us to the world and gave his blood on behalf of the living and the dead, so that he redeemed us from our sins.[80]

These lines could easily be read as the elaboration, in very physical terms, of a passage in the famous (Gnostic) *Gospel of Judas*, where Judas says to Jesus:

> I know who you are and from where you have come. You have come from the immortal eon of Barbelo, and the one who sent you is him whose name I am not worthy to pronounce.[81]

In spite of such suggestive analogies, however, the whole phenomenon of these performative liturgies that evoke complex celestial landscapes and hierarchies is perhaps best connected to a common ancestor, to a ritually-based cosmological system that underlies both Gnostic descriptions of the divine world, with their complicated unfolding of a celestial hierarchy, and the liturgies transmitted by the Coptic magical spells and handbooks.[82] It may be speculated that

80 Choat and Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, 44.

81 R. Kasser and G. Wurst, eds., *The Gospel of Judas. Critical Edition* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2007), 189.

82 For the claim that a 'magic cosmological system' underlies Gnostic Barbelo texts, see R. van den Broek, *Gnostic Religion in Antiquity* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 26–28; for the growing interest in the Gnostic-magic interface, see e.g. H.M. Jackson, "The Origin in Ancient Incantatory *voces magicae* of Some Names in the Sethian Gnostic System," *VC* 43 (1989): 69–79; E. Thomassen, "Sethian Names in Magical Texts: Protophanes and Meirotheos," in *Gnosticism, Platonism and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honour of John D. Turner*, ed. K. Corrigan and T. Rasimus, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 82 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013), 63–77; A. Van den Kerchove, "Le *Livre*

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such a system derives from ancient Jewish celestial topographies, but here—again—much further research remains to be done.

The potential of Coptic magical liturgies for absorbing traditional material is perhaps best illustrated by the so-called *Schutzengelgebet*, a prayer for angelic protection.[83] Several Coptic liturgies, including the Dongola Prayer of the Virgin quoted above, incorporate this prayer, which consists of a set of brief invocations of the seven archangels. It derives from the "Bedtime *Shema*," a traditional Jewish prayer for protection at night that itself may have roots in ancient Mesopotamian religion.[84] The Coptic version expanded the original series of four angels into the number of seven and, curiously, developed into a *charitesion*, a spell for obtaining *charis*, charm and success, as the following example shows. It is taken—with its introductory formulae—from the early Giessen version of the Dongola Prayer of the Virgin:

> God, may you grant me today your seven Archangels, who were with you before you created the entire race of men, so that they come and watch over my body and my spirit, (they) whose names are: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Souriel, Salathiel, Anael and Saraphouel. May they be with me, N.N., and accomplish my rites and all the spells of (my) tongue.
>
> Let Michael come to my right.
>
> Let Gabriel come to my left.
>
> Let Raphael stand by me.
>
> Let Souriel not frighten me.[85]
>
> Let Ragouel set a crown upon my head.[86]
>
> Let Anael give charm to my face before the entire race of Adam.
>
> Let Saraphouel give force to my body and straighten my ways wherever I go.
>
> Let Iao-Sabaoth-Adonai-Eloi speak before me, by day and by night.[87]

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du grand traité initiatique (Deux livres de Ieou): dessins et rites," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*, 109–120; J. van der Vliet, "Gnostiek en magie: Barbelo en de vier hemelse lichten [Gnosticism and magic: Barbelo and the four celestial luminaries]," in *Waar haalden de gnostici hun wijsheid vandaan? Over de bronnen, de doelgroep en de tegenstanders van de gnostische beweging*, ed. A.P. Bos and G.P. Luttikhuizen (Budel: Damon, 2016), 179–93.

83 H.J. Polotsky, "Suriel der Trompeter," *Le Muséon* 49 (1936): 231–243. Reprint, Polotsky, *Collected Papers* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971), 288–300.

84 D. Levene, D. Marx, and S. Bhayro, "'Gabriel is on their right': Angelic Protection in Jewish Magic and Babylonian Lore," *Studia Mesopotamica* 1 (2014): 185–98.

85 Other versions make Souriel blow the trumpet; see H.J. Polotsky, "Suriel der Trompeter."

86 Note that the fifth archangel is called Salathiel in the first enumeration.

87 Kropp, *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos*, 10–12.

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Compared to the complex and often bizarre world of the Coptic liturgies, other genres may seem rather straightforward. Such is the case, for instance, of the representatives of the widespread international genre of the verbal charms with their sing-song qualities, love of repetition and numerical expansion and predilection for story-telling.[88] The following charm unfolds as a dialogue between an *ego*, who assumes the role of the child-god Horus, and the goddess Isis.[89] The *historiola* is twice told by one of the actors or voices of the spell, the second time in a much abbreviated form. Note that similar spells turn the single girl of the story into seven girls.[90] In order to clarify the structure of the charm and facilitate comparison with a second charm cited below, again paragraph numbers have been added:

> 1A. I walked through the doorway of Hell and I found a beautiful black-eyed girl, sitting at a well of stone, carrying a traveling bag, drawing water in a bucket of bronze, […] of iron.
>
> 1B. I told her: "Hey, beauty, give me a kiss upon my mouth!" She said to me: […] (her refusal falls largely in a lacuna)
>
> 2. […] I ran away from here and I suffered and I wept and I sighed. Isis said to me: "Why do you weep and sigh?"
>
> 3AB. (I said:) "How should I not be weeping? I found a beautiful woman and I wanted to kiss her upon her mouth, but she did not comply with my desire!"
>
> 4. (Isis said:) "No wonder, as you did not find me and did not find my name and did not find the name of these three angels …"

It is easy to imagine the oral performance of such a miniature piece of theater. Precisely the literary characteristics of such charms may have contributed to both their perceived efficacy and the survival over time, in Christian milieus, of such pre-Christian elements as the Horus-Isis stories.[91]

88 See e.g. H.S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay on the Power of Words," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 105–158 and J. Roper, "Towards a Poetics, Rhetorics and proxemics of Verbal Charms," *Folklore* 24 (2003): 7–49.

89 Charm after S. Donadoni, "Un incantesimo amatorio copto," *Atti della Accademia delle scienze di Torino* II: *Classe di scienze morali* 100 (1965–66): 285–292.

90 E.g. R. Martín Hernández and S. Torallas Tovar, "'You Who Impose Sleep Upon Abimelech for Seventy-two Years': An Egyptian Spell against Insomnia," in *Contesti magici / Contextos mágicos*, 309–312.

91 D. Frankfurter, "The Laments of Horus in Coptic"; D. Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 56–58, 206–11. For an ancient precursor, from the later New Kingdom, see J.F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, Nisaba 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 33, no. 49.

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In spells of the charm-type, the entire spell may consist of a *historiola*, which can be told several times, ending in more or less simple instructions for the ritual procedure. The following spell against fever (P. Naqlun 78/93) has been entirely Christianized, but formally echoes earlier charms of the Horus-Isis type.[92] It was found during excavations on a monastic site in the Fayyum province.

> 1A. N.N., the son of N.N., walked through a wind out of wind, through an exhaustion (?) out of exhaustion (?), through a heat out of the heat of Pashons and Paone and Epiphi and Mesore, the four scorching months of the year.
>
> 1B. He hit upon the Hot Wind and found him standing near a hot burning blaze. He (= the Hot Wind) filled his mouth with fire and spat it into N.N., the son of N.N., and he left no breath to him but for the breath of the Lord (cf. Gen. 2:7).
>
> 2. He (= N.N.) escaped and hurried away, and he hit upon the source of the Merciful. He found the Virgin Mary, bathing her beloved son. He hurried to greet him. And the Savior, Jesus, said to him: "What is the matter with N.N., son of N.N.?" And the latter said:
>
> 3A. "I came to walk through a wind out of wind, through an exhaustion (?) out of exhaustion (?), through a heat out of the heat of Pashons and Paone and Epiphi and Mesore, the four scorching months of the year.
>
> 3B. I found the Hot Wind standing near a hot burning blaze. He filled his mouth with fire and spat it into me, and he left no breath to me but for the breath of the Lord."
>
> 4. And Jesus said to him: "You did not find my name and the name of my Father. You did not find the name of Mary, my mother. You did not find the name of Michael and Gabriel. You did not find the name of the Twenty-Four Elders (cf. Rev. 4). You did not find the name of the Twelve Apostles.
>
> 5. Take … " (a much damaged *praxis* follows).

The similarities with the Horus-Isis spell, quoted earlier, are obvious. Both texts have the character of a dialogue, marking them for oral performance. At the same time, they exhibit a classical narrative structure with a travelling hero who meets a complication, reacts by fleeing and then finds a solution thanks to

92 J. van der Vliet, *P. Naqlun Copt. I: The Magical Texts and Related Material*, Supplements of *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* (Warsaw: Warsaw University, forthcoming). In addition to Coptic ones, compare e.g. the Demotic spell *PDM* XIV, 1219–1227 (trans. *GMPT*, 250–51).

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divine intervention (Isis, Jesus). The story that is being told ranks them in the class of the *Begegnungssegen* or encounter-spells. As the verbal charm itself, the *Begegnungssegen* represents an international genre, known from the entire late antique and medieval world.[93] In the present examples, the narrated encounter triggers a crisis (love-sickness, fever), which is then resolved within the spell. The Naqlun spell, which shows considerable innovation, in particular in its personnel (Jesus, Mary), undoubtedly reflects a deliberate effort at modernization of a traditional textual format (the manuscript can be roughly dated to about the 10th century).

Pre-Christian influences but, above all, the influence of juridical practices can be detected in curses that take the form of a legal complaint.[94] Some even style themselves formally as a *libellus*, "petition, libel." When a lawsuit has gone wrong or when legal means of solving a problem are of no avail, there may be no other resort than soliciting the intervention of higher (or lower) powers through the mediation of a ritual rather than a legal expert. As an example of this 'juridical' genre, the opening lines of a recently published example from a papyrus in Cairo may be quoted.[95] It is a petition invoking God and the angels as well the biblical Daniel in the lion's den (cf. Dan. 6) in order to put a female client in the right against a series of formally identified persons, whose offence against the client regrettably remains obscure.

> It is […]re (the damaged name of the female complainant) who writes this *libellus*[96] against Mariam and Kallinikos, the brother of Mariam.
>
> May you quickly do justice to me against them!
>
> O Lord God, may you quickly do justice to me against them.
>
> Michael and Gabriel and Souriel, may you quickly do justice to me against them.

93 *ACM* no. 4 (re-edited in R. Mazza, "*P.Oxy.* XI, 1384. Medicina, rituali di guarigione e cristianesimi nell'Egitto tardoantico," *ASE* 24/2 (2007): 437–62) is a relatively early Christian example from Egypt; see F. Ohrt, "Über Alter und Ursprung der Begegnungssegen," *Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde* 35 (1936): 49–58.

94 Björck, *Die Fluch des Christen Sabinus*; H.S. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing. The Appeal for Justice in Judicial Prayers," in *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Ch. A. Faraone and D. Obbink, (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60–106; Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness in Coptic Magical Writing," 92–94.

95 C. Louis, "Une prière magique copte en dialecte akhmîmique," in *Études coptes XII: Quatorzième journée d'études coptes* (*Rome, 11–13 juin 2009*), ed. A. Boud'hors and C. Louis, Cahiers de la bibliothèque copte 18 (Paris: De Boccard, 2013), 25–36.

96 The text, which is very badly written, has *libanos*, which makes no sense.

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> The one who is seated above the Cherubim and the Seraphim, may you do justice to me against Mariam and Kallinikos, the pottery merchant, quickly!
>
> O Lord God, do not tarry!
>
> Daniel who was thrown in the lion's den, may you do justice to me against Mariam and Kallinikos, her brother, (and) Thanasia, the daughter of Thiaraje, and Thiaraje.

The curse continues by adding more and more names to those by whom the author of the petition feels wronged, asking God and the angels to smite them. Clearly, Mariam and Kallinikos and all the other persons who are identified in the text, whatever their offence may have been, were beyond the reach of human justice. The paradigm of Daniel in his lion's den (also invoked in *ACM* no. 91) undoubtedly reflects the complainant's perception of her own situation facing her enemies. Yet, what is most interesting in this example of a juridical curse, is that it is formally characterized by its opening phrase as a written speech act, a speech act that—analogous to a legal act—works by virtue of its being fixed in writing.[97]

5 Critical Challenges

In spite of a rich and ever expanding corpus of texts and a considerable hermeneutic effort over the last century, it is as yet impossible to write a history of Coptic magical literature. Even the brief review presented above shows conspicuous absences. This has to do partly with the sheer difficulty of many texts but also with obsolete essentialist paradigms, such as the opposition of magic to religion.[98] A practical difficulty consists in the dispersion and often limited accessibility of the many texts published since the appearance of Kropp's handbook (*AKZ*).

In this essay the corpus of Coptic magical texts has been provisionally defined by postulating the criterion of a varying degree of textual otherness or 'markedness.' A first attempt at linking this markedness to actual scribal

97 For the importance of the writing act, see e.g. Frankfurter, below, Chapter 23; and L. Weiss, "Perpetuated action," in *A Companion to the Archaeology of Religion in the Ancient World*, ed. R. Raja & J. Rüpke (New York: Wiley and Blackwell, 2015), 60–70.

98 For a critical discussion of the scholarly discourse on magic, see B.-Ch. Otto, *Magie: Rezeptions- und diskursgeschichtliche Analyse von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit*, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 57 (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2011).

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practices was made by T.S. Richter in 2015.[99] Yet a considerable amount of work remains to be done in mapping the broad array of textual practices attested by the sources, identifying scribal styles, textual genres and formats, literary strategies, formulae and stylistic devices. Some genres and formats, such as the charm or the *Begegnungssegen*, are well attested internationally and future study may therefore profit from taking a broader scope.

Furthermore, the corpus, however heterogeneous, is basically a corpus of ritual artifacts. The authority of the ritual was constructed in the social process of its performance. There is a growing consensus that so-called Coptic magic was practiced by members of the lower clergy, monks and deacons, who were able to dispense ritual and scribal knowledge. But were they a designated class of ritual specialists, comparable to the Ethiopian *däbtära*? The textualized rituals that we possess provide precious few clues to the social contexts in which the rituals functioned. Indeed, the practical aspects of the ritual performance are largely unknown to us. If shorter charms could be easily recited in a domestic setting, this would seem more difficult for the performance of the long and complicated liturgies that are so characteristic of Coptic magical texts.

It is not always clear how the authority of the rituals was constructed on the textual level. The Christian liturgy has already long ago been identified as an important source of authoritative discourse.[100] Legal practice may have been another one.[101] The shared language of liturgy and law offered prototypes for performative speech, providing ready-made textual tropes for praying and appealing. The Bible and Christian literature, hagiography and the apocrypha, represent in a profoundly Christianized cultural environment the weight of tradition. Yet neither the Bible nor the apocrypha can explain the wealth and complexity of the rituals that survive in these manuscripts or their continuous use of pre-Christian material. Instead, it is likely that alternative sources of authoritative tradition were tapped that remain to be identified. In any case, it may be clear that unqualified scholarly attributions to Jewish, Gnostic or Pharaonic traditions cannot suffice. Instead of hunting for 'survivals,' future research in Coptic magical texts should identify the channels by which traditional ritual knowledge was transmitted, as well as the specific social practices that demanded such ritual knowledge in a Christian society.

99 Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness in Coptic Magical Writing."

100 See Kropp in *AKZ* III.

101 Björck, *Die Fluch des Christen Sabinus*.

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CHAPTER 15

Binding Spells on Tablets and Papyri

Esther Eidinow

1 "Curse Tablets," Categories and Collections

The subject of this chapter, binding spells, or *defixiones*—from the Latin *defigo* "I nail down" or "transfix"—are found inscribed on lead tablets and written on papyri, during the period from the sixth century BCE to the eighth century CE.[1] They are often referred to generally as "curses"; those scratched into lead are more specifically described as "curse tablets." As David Jordan noted, in his magisterial first collection of these texts published in 1985, "*Defixiones*, more commonly known as curse tablets, are inscribed pieces of lead or lead alloy, usually in the form of small, thin sheets, intended to influence by supernatural means, the actions or welfare of persons or animals against their will."[2] The primary form of influence sought in binding spells was to constrain or "bind" the victim—and what we can elicit from the ancient evidence about the techniques used, and contexts in which they were employed, is discussed further below.

But first, a note about changes in categorisation: over the last 20 years, led by the work of Henk Versnel among others, scholars have come to recognize that *defixiones*, or binding spells, are not the only type of texts within this broad category of "curse tablets." As Roger Tomlin has observed, with specific reference to the curse tablets from Bath, there is another, which comprises "petitions for justice, not magical spells."[3] These "prayers for justice," as they are now commonly called, are identified by a set of typical features, but their central attribute is that they are all texts that have been written by someone or on behalf of someone who has been wronged by a person or persons; the tablets

1 See J.G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 27 and 263. The times at which they appear in different media in different places is discussed further below.

2 SGD, 151. See D. Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe Vol. II: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. B. Ankarloo and S. Clark (London: Athlone, 1999), 1–90, for discussion of the role of the supernatural.

3 R.S.O. Tomlin, "The Curse Tablets," *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath Vol. 2. The Finds from the Sacred Spring*, ed. B. Cunliffe (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988), 62.

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from Bath, for example, often concern the theft of property. Prayers for justice tend not only to ask the god for help, offering some kind of justification for the appeal, but also to involve the divinity more closely: for example, in the case of stolen goods, the prayer may dedicate the stolen item to the deity's charge, or deliver the wrongdoer to the gods, or transfer the case itself to the god's care.[4] The earliest examples of this type date to the Hellenistic period (Versnel links them to the "strongly monarchical flavour … characteristic of religious expression in Asia Minor"), and they flourish in the Imperial period.[5]

The relationship between binding curses and prayers for justice has been a matter of debate, with some scholars emphasizing the close relationships or similarities between the two types, and others drawing firmer boundaries.[6] The divergence between the two groups is not always so clear in practice: there are a number of texts that share the characteristics of both binding spells and prayers for justice, and these have been called "border area curses." However, Versnel has recently argued that a much sharper distinction should be made between, on the one hand, traditional binding curses, from which developed some early "border area curses"—"more or less spontaneous, individual creations," showing a wide variety of expressions—and, on the other, later "true" or "pure" prayers for justice, which, he suggests, originated as "personal expressions in the context of temple-religion."[7] This paper will focus on binding spells on lead and on papyri, but will mention prayers for justice and border-area curses where relevant; and, recognizing the difficulty of distinguishing binding spells from prayers for justice, this essay will use the term "curse tablets" where appropriate to indicate the undifferentiated corpus.

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4 A full description of their characteristics can be found in H.S. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. C. Faraone and D. Obbink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60–106, updated in Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West: New Finds and Publications since 1990," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30th Sept.–1st Oct. 2005*, ed. R. Gordon and M. Simon, RGRW 168 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 275–354. Some scholars argue that prayers for justice are a sub-category of *defixiones*; others that they are a separate category, with a realm of texts that overlap (the so-called "border area curses"); see Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West" for an overview. Dreher 2009 rejects the category, arguing that it crosses existing categories rather than supplanting them; Versnel (2009) responds in the same volume. The categories that scholars use to describe curse tablets are discussed further below.

5 Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West," 333–4.

6 See F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. F. Philip (London; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 121–134, esp. 126; and 159–160; and Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls," 38–44.

7 See n. 4; Quotation: Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West," 275–354.

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2 Corpora and Collections

Earlier collections of texts tend not to draw a distinction between binding spells and prayers for justice, often including what might now be called prayers for justice as a sub-category of "curse tablets," or *defixiones*.[8] To read the material in the ancient languages: the chief collections are, for the Greek material, R. Wünsch, *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae* (*DTA*), which contains 220 examples (all Attic Greek);[9] A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (*DT*), which contains 166 tablets (and 137 tablets in languages other than, or as well as, Greek); while D.R. Jordan "A Survey of Greek Defixiones Not Included in the Special Corpora" (SGD) lists another 189 published examples and reports the existence of a further 461 tablets which have not yet been published; Jordan's latest survey, "New Greek Curse Tablets (1985–2000)" (NGCT) lists 122 more.[10]

Curse tablets in languages other than Greek start to appear in the second half of the fourth century BCE, with Latin curse tablets appearing in the second century BCE.[11] Audollent included 79 texts in Latin (and a further 31 in a mixture of Latin and Greek). Since then, further discoveries, including, for example, from the sites of Bath and Uley, the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna at Mainz, and the fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome, have brought the total number of curses written in Latin up to (at last count) 579, according to A. Kropp, in *Magische Sprachverwendung in vulgarlateinischen Fluchtafeln*.[12]

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8 Although it should be noted that one of the four categories distinguished by Audollent was *defixiones* written to recover stolen objects (DT p. lxxxix).

9 Jaime Curbera kindly tells me that a new edition of Wünsch's collection of tablets is being prepared under the auspices of the *Inscriptiones Graecae* project, by editors Sergio Giannobile, David Jordan and Jaime Curbera.

10 See above, n. 1, for bibliographical data. Note that Jordan uses the term "curse tablets" rather than *defixiones* for this collection, since, as he noted, "curse tablets" could encompass those texts that were better described as prayers for justice (pp. 5–6).

11 A. Kropp, *Defixiones: Ein aktuelles Corpus lateinischer Fluchtafeln* (Speyer: Kartoffeldruck-Verlag Kai Broderson, 2008), 6; and see R. Gordon and M. Simón "Introduction" in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 16, n. 56. For work on bilingual curses see J.N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and J. Curbera, M. Sierra Delage, and I. Velazquez, "A Bilingual Curse Tablet from Barchin del Hoyo (Cuenca, Spain)," *ZPE* 125 (1999): 279–83.

12 In 1996, Tomlin reported that Britain was the source of over 250 of the 500 or so Latin curse tablets then discovered (reported by R.S.O. Tomlin, *Oxford University Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents: Newsletter No. 2, Spring 1996* (Center for the Study of Ancient Documents, February 1996), http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/CSAD/Newsletters/Newsletter2/Newsletter2b.html. Accessed: 06/19/2018. For Kropp's figures, see p. 37 (but 578, on p. 247, see review M. Buora *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 55, August, 2009). She excluded 41 from her final corpus, and her volume includes a CD-ROM containing the 537 texts referred

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These texts demonstrate both local languages (for example, some Bath tablets may provide the first attestations of written British Celtic) and external influences as discussed in J. Adams, *An Anthology of Informal Latin 200 BC–AD 900*.[13]

While the Latin material may at first sight seem to be both smaller than its Greek counterpart, and in many ways derivative if not assimilated, there are, as Richard Gordon and Marco Simón point out, "legitimate questions about cultural difference" that remain.[14] Their own volume, *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, based on a conference at the University of Zaragoza in 2005, provides an invaluable exploration of magical practice in the Latin-speaking West: it gives texts and detailed analysis of particular cases, as well as a general overview of the context of the field and guide to further scholarship.[15] For more details on the material from Bath and Uley, begin with R.S.O. Tomlin, "The Curse Tablets," in *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath Vol. 2. The Finds from the Sacred Spring*, ed. B. Cunliffe (*TSM*).[16] Two general surveys by Tomlin are also recommended: "Curse Tablets from Roman Britain," in *XI Congresso Internationale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina* and "Writing to the gods in Britain," in A.E. Cooley (ed.), *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*.[17] The Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents at Oxford provides an overview of recent finds and related bibliography.[18] For individual finds, see reports in the annual survey in *Britannia*; and Roger Tomlin himself

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to; see ibid. p. 7 of the work for the lists of tablets omitted, and explanations. Kropp, *Defixiones* provides a corpus of 382 texts for analysis.

13 J.N. Adams, *An Anthology of Informal Latin 200 BC–AD 900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). On the appearance of Celtic in *Tab. Sulis* 14 and 18 see Mullen 2007. (Mullen counsels caution: she concludes that the tablets may contain examples of Continental Celtic rather than British Celtic.) On external influences on local language in British curse tablets, see Adams, *An Anthology of Informal Latin 200 BC–AD 900*, nos. 35–37.

Particular dialects are also found: see SGD 91 for Sicilian dialect and *CTBS* 16 for a text in a local Latin dialect. K. McDonald, *Oscan in Southern Italy and Sicily: Evaluating Language Contact in a Fragmentary Corpus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 138–139 provides a table of the languages of curse tablets found in Italy from the sixth to first century BCE. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, 145 notes that it is probably "the potency of Italian regional magic" that reverses the usual adoption of Latin phraseology in Oscan curse tablets.

14 Gordon and Simón "Introduction," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 3.

15 R. Gordon and M. Simón, eds., *Magical Practice in the Latin West*.

16 See, n. 4.

17 R.S.O. Tomlin, "Curse Tablets from Roman Britain," in *XI Congresso Internationale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina* (Rome: Quasar, 1999), 553–65 and Tomlin, "Writing to the Gods in Britain," in *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*, ed. A.E. Cooley (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2002), 165–179.

18 See http://curses.csad.ox.ac.uk/.

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kindly draws attention to "A Roman inscribed tablet from Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Nottinghamshire)," *Antiquaries Journal* 84.[19] He notes that two of the best discoveries of recent years have been published in "Paedagogium and Septizonium: Two Roman Lead Tablets from Leicester," *ZPE* 167.[20] The finds from the joint temple of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz are reported in *Fluchtafeln. Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber*, ed. Kai Brodersen and Amina Kropp.[21] What has been read of the tablets from the fountain of Anna Perenna can be found in Jurgen Blänsdorf "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae" in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*.[22]

The texts written on papyri or parchment largely date to the second to fifth centuries CE (although some may be earlier) and were found in Egypt; they include binding spells in Demotic Egyptian and Coptic.[23] They comprise not only examples of "applied magic," but also formularies, giving instructions for the creation of spells and performance of rituals. Karl Preisendanz catalogued those written in Greek (in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* [*PGM*]),[24] but this material should now be considered alongside the texts written in Demotic Egyptian.[25] As noted by Andrew Wilburn, it is important to remember that their different catalogues and numbers may refer to texts that were composed in the same cultural context and, indeed, appear on the same papyrus rolls.[26]

19 R.S.O. Tomlin, "A Roman Inscribed Tablet from Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Nottinghamshire)," *Antiquaries Journal 84* (2004): 346–52. On this tablet see also now Adams, *An Anthology of Informal Latin 200 BC–AD 900*, no. 36.

20 R.S.O. Tomlin, "Paedagogium and Septizonium: Two Roman Lead Tablets from Leicester," *ZPE* 167 (2009): 167–207.

21 Kai Brodersen and Amina Kropp, eds., *Fluchtafeln. Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Antike, 2004).

22 Jurgen Blänsdorf "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae" in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*.

23 H. Betz, *GMPT*, xli. These are the so-called "Anastasi Papyri," named after the nineteenth-century diplomat who first bought them.

24 K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2 vols. (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1928, 1931). A new edition of vol. II was produced by A. Henrichs (1974), and this contains the papyri originally planned for vol. III, (up to *PGM* LXXXI). See Betz, *GMPT*, xliv.

25 On the ways in which the Demotic Magical Papyri (*PDM*) were long overlooked in favour of the Greek corpus, see J.H. Johnson, "Introduction to the Demotic Magical Papyri" in *GMPT*, lv–lviii, lv and J. Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual 100–300 CE* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 16–19.

26 A. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 27. On the history of the discovery and publication of the *PGM*, see the introduction to Betz 1986, and Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*, 16–19. On the cultural relationship between Greek and Demotic texts, see further below.

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W.M. Brashear's "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)" *ANRW* 18.5 provides a useful overview and extensive bibliography.[27] The Greek and Demotic texts have been usefully published in English translation edited by H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* [*GMPT*]; M. Meyer and R. Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* [*ACM*] collects Christian texts—spells, charms, amulets, etc.—dating from the first to the eleventh or twelfth centuries CE, with a useful chapter (6) of sexual spells, which the authors explicitly related to binding spells.[28] R.W. Daniel and F. Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum*, vols 1 and II [*Suppl. Mag.*] are intended as a supplement to Preisendanz; they contain texts on papyri and lead, all from Egypt and in Greek (except I, 36, in Latin).[29]

A number of these collections contain translations. Further published collections of translated texts, largely Greek, include, J.G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (*CTBS*), and E. Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (*OCR*), which provides an appendix of a number of Greek texts, dating from the sixth to the first centuries BCE.[30] Online resources include the database *Thesaurus Defixionum Magdeburgensis*, an open access and updateable corpus of all known curse tablet texts, containing both binding spells and prayers for justice, from a range of media, including papyri, along with available translations.[31]

For succinct introductions to key themes and aspects of the study of the Greek texts, see the list of Suggested Readings at the conclusion of this chapter.

3 Meet the Family

Let us begin with a few examples that illustrate the range of items within the larger category of "curse tablets." The following texts were found thousands of miles apart; their dates of origin span something like 800 years:

27 W.M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)" *ANRW* 18.5 (1995): 3380–3684.

28 D. Frankfurter, "Introduction to Sexual Spells," in *Ancient Christian Magic*, 147–51, esp. 148.

29 R.W. Daniel and F. Maltomini, eds., *Supplementum Magicum*, 2 vols., Papyrologica Coloniensia vols. 16.1 and 16.2. (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–92).

30 E. Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 2013).

31 This project is based at the university of Magdeburg and directed by Prof. Dr. Martin Dreher; See http://www-e.uni-magdeburg.de/defigo/wordpress/?page_id=2.

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1) The first example is from Sicily, and is one of the oldest binding spells so far found, dating to the end of the sixth, or beginning of the fifth, century BCE.[32] It is inscribed on both sides of a lead tablet, which was buried near the cemetery at Buffa, near Selinus; below is the text from one side.[33]

Side A: "The tongue of Eukles and that of Aristophanis and that of Angeilis and that of Alkiphron and that of Hagestratos. Of the advocates,[34] of Eukles and Aristophanis, their tongues. And the tongue of …"

Side B: "and that of Oinotheos and that of … the tongue."

2) Probably dating to the early fourth century BCE, this spell takes the form of a small (H. 0.065 by 0.11) oval box made of lead, along with a small figurine (H. 0.06), its arms bound behind its back; these were buried in a grave in the Kerameikos, Athens.[35] The text, scratched into the lid of the box, reads:

"Barburtides, Xophugos/Nikomachos, Oinokles/Mnesimachos/Chamaios, Teisonides/Charisandros/Demokles" followed by the phrase "and if there anyone else with them/as advocate or witness." The right leg of the doll is inscribed with the name "Mnesimachos."

3) The third example is the text from one side of an opisthographic lead tablet; it is also from Athens, although the exact location is unknown, and also dates to the fourth century BCE:[36]

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32 On the difficulties of dating these texts, see *OCR* 286 n.13.

33 SGD 95 (*CTBS* for the text). Also: A. Brugnone, "*Defixiones inedite da Selinunte*," in *Studi di storia antica offerti dagli allievi a Eugenio Manni*, ed. Eugenio Manni (Rome: G. Bretschneider, 1976), 73–79, no. 2; K. Brodersen, ed., *Gebet und Fluch, Zeichen und Traum. Aspekte religiöser Kommunikation in der Antike*, Antike Kultur und Geschichte 1 (Munster: Lit, 2001), 62; and L. Bettarini, *Corpus delle defixiones di Selinunte* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2005), 81–86, no. 16.

34 The Greek is σύνδικοι. See L. Rubinstein, *Litigation and Cooperation: Supporting Speakers in the Courts of Classical Athens* (Stuttgart: Stuttgart, 2000), 43–45, and 64–65 for translation and discussion of the role of this term.

35 SGD 9 and *CTBS* no. 41; for text and translation see *OCR*, 407. See F. Costabile, "Defixiones dal Kerameikos di Atene—II maledizioni processuali," *Minima Epigraphica et Papyrologica* 3 (2000): 37–122 and J. Trumpf, "Fluchtafel und Rachepuppe," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 73 (1958): 94–102.

36 DT 68, *CTBS* 22: This is a complex tablet and very difficult to translate, but it is included here to illustrate the range of styles found among these magical texts, and the potential they offered for individual expression. In describing the binding of Theodora, this text exhibits a bewitching word play using a number of similar adjectives with meanings

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'Just as this man lies here, powerless (ἀτελής), in the same way may everything of Theodora's be ineffectual (ἀτέλεστα), both her words and deeds, those directed to Charias and those to other men. I bind Theodora in the presence of Hermes of the underworld and in the presence of the unmarried (ἀτελέστους) dead and in the presence of Tethys.[37] Powerless (ἀτέλεστα) the deeds directed at Charias and the other men and sex with Charias and Charias should forget sex; Charias should forget dear little Theodora,[38] the woman he loves.

4) The fourth example is one of five ritual texts from across Egypt, all possibly, and partially, modelled on a particular "recipe" from the *PGM*.[39] Written on a lead tablet, and dating to the second to third centuries CE, this text starts with a series of *voces magicae*, seeming nonsense words that were regarded as powerful, some of it written in an inverted triangle shape; the comprehensible text of the spell is 44 lines long, and begins:[40]

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relating to the idea of being incomplete or unsuccessful, that is, in the sense of not having completed one's life's purpose. I have chosen to translate them here as "powerless" or "ineffectual," when used of the dead corpse, and of Theodora's actions, respectively. When used alongside "the dead" the meaning may be more specific—referring to the lack of a particular religious initiation (Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae*) or unmarried (Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 150–1), but see S.I. Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 78, n. 127. For an overview of debate about the meaning of this term see *OCR*, 149 and 291, n. 53. Further reading, see B. Bravo, "Une tablette magique d'Olbia: les morts, les héros et les démons," in *Poikilia. Études offertes á Jean-Pierre Vernant*, ed. A. Adler, Recherches d'histoire et de sciences sociales 26 (Paris: École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1987), 205–6; F. Graf, "Fluch und Verwünschung," in *Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum*, ed. J.-C. Balty (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2005), 266–67, no. 89, and J.C.B. Petropoulos, "The Erotic Magical Papyri," *Proceedings of the XVIII International Congress of Papyrology 2* (Athens: 1988): 215–222, esp. 219–220.

37 The word translated here as "in the presence of" is πρός; there is some debate about the meaning of this word (see further below).

38 Alternatively, this phrase could be taken to refer to a child of Theodora.

39 The spells are *Suppl. Mag.* 1, nos. 46–51, based on *PGM* IV 296–433, see *CTBS* 27–28.

40 Sections J-K of the diplomatic transcription offered in *Suppl. Mag.* 1, no. 48. P. Mich. 757, inv. 6925: D.G. Martinez, ed. and comm., *Michigan Papyri XVI, A Greek Love Charm from Egypt* (*P.Mich. 757*) (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1991), who dated it third-fourth centuries CE. On triangular formations in spells, see D. Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic: the Power of the Word in Egyptian and Greek traditions," *Helios* 21 (1994): 199–200 (and below, Chapter 23), and R. Gordon, "Shaping the Text: Innovation and Authority in Graeco-Egyptian Malign Magic" in *Kykeon: Studies in honour of HS Versnel*, ed. H. Versnel, H.F.J. Horstmanshoff, H.W. Singor, F.T. van Straten, and J.H.M. Strubbe (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 69–111; focused on amulets, but with an overview of the use of text shapes across different types of magical text.

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I deposit this binding charm with you, chthonic gods, Plouton and Kore *Yesemmeigadon* and Koure Persephone *Ereschigal* and Adonis, also called *Barbaritha*, and chthonic Hermes Thoth, *Phokensepseu earektathou misonktaich* and mighty Anoubis *Pseriphtha*, who holds the keys of the gates to Hades and chthonic daemons, gods, men and women who suffered an untimely death, youths and maidens, year after year, month after month, day after day, night after night, hour after hour. I adjure you, all the daemons in this place, to assist this corpse-daemon. <Rouse yourself for me, corpse-daemon> whoever you are, whether male or female, and go into every place, into every quarter, into every house, and bind Kopria, whom her mother Taesis bore, of whom you have the hairs of the head, for Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore, so that she not be fucked, nor be buggered, nor make pleasure for another youth or another man, except for Ailourion only, whom his mother named Koprion bore, and let her not even be able to eat, or to drink, or to get sleep ever, or to enjoy good health, or have rest in her soul or mind as she yearns for Ailourion …

5) A fairly typical text from Uley in Gloucestershire:[41]

To the god Mercury (from) Docilinus … Varianus and Peregrina and Sabinianus who have brought evil harm on my beast and are … I ask you that you drive them to the greatest death, and do not allow them health or sleep unless they redeem from you what they have administered to me.

6) The death of Germanicus, who had been adopted as the son of Tiberius, and grandson of Augustus. Tacitus reports that:

It is a fact that explorations of the floor and walls revealed the remains of human bodies, spells, curse tablets, the name Germanicus inscribed on lead tablets, charred and blood-smeared ashes, and other implements of witchcraft by which it is believed that the living soul can be devoted to the infernal powers.[42]

41 Uley 43: translation at http://curses.csad.ox.ac.uk/; see M.W.C. Hassall and R.S.O. Tomlin, "Roman Britain in 1988," *Britannia* 20 (1989): 329–31; see also Tomlin, "Curse tablets from Roman Britain," 554; J.N. Adams, "British Latin: The Text, Interpretation and Language of the Bath Curse Tablets," *Britannia* 23 (1992): 7–8; and Kropp, *Defixiones*, no.3. 22/16. The hand is very similar to that of a tablet found at Bath (*Tab. Sulis* 10).

42 Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.69.5.

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At first sight, these texts may seem quite unrelated: text 1 comprises a simple list of names, others supply a more elaborate series of formulations. Texts 3 and 4 seem to assert control over a lover; text 2 targets victory in a law case. Texts five and six relate attempts to deter or even kill a political opponent. Moreover, to these initial texts, we could add numerous others with still further variations: for example, a binding spell from Bath, in the United Kingdom, that aims to punish whoever stole the writer's bathing costume and cloak;[43] or a spell to hamper a popular team of charioteers, buried under the starting-gates of a Roman circus in a North African town;[44] or perhaps a description by an early Christian writer of how a saint freed the victim of a binding spell from the torture of its supernatural grip.[45] Separated by times, places and cultures, these texts all belong to the category of "curse tablets," and provide a snapshot of the great variety of languages and contexts that it contains.

Examples 1–4 above are binding spell texts or *defixiones.* Later literary evidence gives some insight into the precise intention behind even the earlier binding spells: for example, the second-century CE doctor, Galen, describes the claims of ritual experts who targeted the speaking powers of their opponents in court with such spells.[46] The basic idea of binding seems to have been to disable, or render impotent, the target or some particular aspect of the target. The evidence suggests that it was considered possible to release this binding effect: some literary anecdotes describe how destroying the medium of the spell, be it a lead tablet or some other substance (see Text 6, above), may bring relief to its victim.[47] But a number of tablets also include information about the spell-writer's intention not to release the binding until they get what they want.[48] This kind of sentiment fits well within the picture of what

43 Tomlin, "The Curse Tablets," 122.

44 See F. Heintz, "Circus Curses and their Archaeological Contexts," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 11 (1998): 337–342.

45 For example: Eusebius of Caeserea, *Oration on the 30th Anniversary of the Reign of Constantine* (Laus Constantini), chap. 13; Basil of Caesarea, *Epistles*, 188.8; Synesius of Cyrene, *Epistles*, 121; Jerome, *Life of Saint Hilarion the Hermit*, 21 (Patrologia Latina 23, cols 39–40); these all discussed in *CTBS*.

46 Galen, XII p. 251, trans. Kühn); a similar case from Delos is preserved in an inscription: *IG* XI. Pt. 4, 1299; I.U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 68–71, and H. Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Serapis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 53–54.

47 *PGM* IV. 2177 is a spell to break (the power of) other such spells. Earlier evidence is rarer, but Magnes, *PCG Λυδοί* 4 (fifth century BCE) may allude to experts in loosing magical spells.

48 See n. 8 above, and Text 5. Spells with information about loosing: SGD 18 and Phila's tablet from Pella in Macedonia (E. Voutiras, *Dionysophontos gamoi: Marital Life and Magic in Fourth Century Pella* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1998).

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Daniel Ogden has called the "magical arms race," in which protection against the supernatural assault of an enemy could be sought only in finding stronger supernatural protection for oneself—either apotropaic amulets or aggressive counter-spells of one's own.[49]

The Latin term *defixio* might lead to expectations that these texts are examples of a practice of Roman origin or at least that the evidence is primarily Roman, In fact, as the examples above suggest, binding spells are first found in the Greek colonies of Sicily, dating to as early as the end of the sixth century BCE, and most of the 1600 curse tablets that have been discovered are written in Greek.[50] Although by the time of the *PGM*, binding-spells tend to be referred to as *katadesmoi*, pre-imperial terminology is far more varied. In the rare cases when the spells refer to themselves, they use "prayer," or simply "the lead" (a reference to the material on which the spell is written); two examples refer to themselves as letters.[51] Unfortunately, relevant literary evidence from this period is sparse.[52] There are possible references to the practice of magical binding in ancient drama, but few explicit mentions exist.[53] What there is suggests a fluidity of terminology: Plato, for example, uses two different terms, κατάδεσμος and κατάδεσις.[54] Latin literary evidence provides a more consistent

49 Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls," 52; for this pattern of behaviour see also D. Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears," *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62, *OCR* 225–37, and E. Eidinow, "Patterns of Persecution: 'Witchcraft' Trials in Classical Athens,'" *Past and Present* 208 (2010): 11–35, and *Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Classical Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

50 This number dates to 1991 (Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls," 4 and C. Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," in *Magika Hiera*, 22). There have of course been discoveries made since then (see collections listed above).

51 Various terms from the Greeks: include 'the lead' DTA 55, side a, l. 16 (and see also DT 85, side A, l. 8 (acc. to E. Ziebarth, "Neue Verfluchungstafeln aus Attika, Boiotien und Euboia," *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,* Phil.-hist. Klasse 33 (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1934), no. 23); κατάδεσμον DT 85, side B, l. 8 (acc. to Ziebarth, "Neue Verfluchungstafeln aus Attika, Boiotien und Euboia," no. 23); ἀπορίαν: Ziebarth, side A, l. 13, with translation in *CTBS*, 87; εὐχά: SGD 91 (according to a reading by A. P. Miller, "Studies in Early Sicilian Epigraphy: An Opisthographic Lead Tablet" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973), supplied and discussed in *CTBS* 76, no. 17); described as letters, *DTA* 102, 103.

52 As E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 205, n. 99.

53 Comedy: Aristophanes, *Acharneses*, ll. 703–18; Aristophanes, *Vespae*, 946–8 Scholion, with Faraone 1989. Tragedy: Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 306 ff. with C. Faraone, "Aeschylus' *humnos desmios* (*Eum*. 306) and Attic Judicial Curse Tablets," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 (1985): 150–54.

54 Plato, *Respublica*, 364c–e; cf. *PGM* IV 2176–7. *Leges*, 933a; a third indirect reference is found in Dinarchus (in Harpokration, *Lexicon of the Ten Orators*, entry under καταδεδέσθαι).

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terminology, preferring *devotiones*, but Latin epigraphic terminology remains varied. *Defixio* is rarely found in Latin curse tablets, which offer, instead, a range of other terms, including *donatio* "dedication," *execratio* "curse," *devotio* "dedication/curse/spell," *commonitorium* "memorandum" and *petitio* "petition." However, these indicate that the underlying aim of these texts was not to bind the target, but to provoke the enactment of divine punishment: these are prayers for justice.[55]

With regard to binding spells and curse tablets more generally, as we will see, the evidence suggests that people from across society participated in different ways in this ritual practice—be it commissioning or writing, selling or using them.[56] There is no doubt that this was a practice that set individuals against each other, but larger groups may also have been involved, in terms of both writers and targets of texts. As discussed in more detail later in this essay, evidence may indicate the existence of workshops of practitioners producing multiple texts to order.[57] Some binding spell texts, which use legal terminology, target a number of individuals all from one legal team, and this may suggest, in turn, that they were commissioned, even composed, by the opposing legal team.[58] Moreover, while we think of this practice as highly private, it is also worth noting that it has some counterpart in community, or even *polis* rituals used to ward off anticipated dangers, both mortal and divine. Some city-states seem to have held annual rituals for binding gods (or representations of them) that represented a particular danger.[59] Obviously, there are marked differences between these and the majority of curse tablets, which tend to be texts; but,

55 Literary terminology: Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.69, 4.52, 16.31 uses *devotiones*; the verb *defigi* is frequently found to describe the practice in Seneca, *On Benefits*, 6.35.4, Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.4.19; Ovid, *Amores*, 3.7.27–30. Epigraphic terms, see *TSM*, 59.

56 See *OCR*, 172 with n. 20 for examples and further reading.

57 See discussion Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri," 3419 (and further on this below).

58 *OCR*, 180–86.

59 See C. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), ch. 5, especially 74–5. Examples given include bound mortals: Olympiodorus of Thebes reports the catastrophic effects of the removal of three bound silver statues *FHG* iv p. 63 F27. Bound gods: *Iliad*, 5.385–91 and *Odessey*, 8.296–99, Enyalius at Sparta: Paus. 3.15.7; Clarian instruction to the Syedrans to bind Ares: Parke 1985, 157–58, Bean and Mitford 1965, no. 26, 1st century BCE; inscription possibly from a bound Ares, *Palatine Anthology* 9.805.). Cities and god-binding rituals include: Artemis Eurynome at Phigalia (Pausanius, 8.41.6); Artemis Soteira at Pellene (Pausanius, 7.27.3, Plutarch, *Aratus*, 32.2); Artemis Ortheia (Lygodesma) at Sparta (Pausanius, 3.16.7–11); Dionysus Aisymnetes (Pausanius, 7.16.6–9); Aphrodite Morpho (Pausanius, 3.15.10–11) at Sparta; Palladium (Pseudo-Plutarch, *Moralia*, 309–10 and Derkylos, *FHG* 4.377.5) at Troy and (Juvenal, 6.265) at Rome; Gorgon's lock at Tegea (Pausanius, 8.47.5 and Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 2.7.3).

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although the use of images in, and related to, the corpus of curse tablets is comparatively rare, both figurines and drawings do occur.[60] If perishable materials were used, as some evidence suggests, they may have been more popular than surviving data indicate.[61] Christopher Faraone has also drawn attention to a possible source of both civic and private binding rituals involving effigies in Egyptian and Near Eastern rituals for removing enemies, both human and supernatural.[62] However, as indeed he stresses, we can only speculate on the mode and method of cultural transmission; moreover, the implications of the existence of *polis*-binding rituals for the status of, and attitudes towards, individual binding rituals is unclear.[63]

Nevertheless, some of the later possible routes of transmission can be traced from the material evidence. At its simplest, the development and spread of the practice of writing binding spells can be described as starting in Sicily in the late sixth/early fifth century BCE, then appearing next in Attica, where most of the tablets from the fourth or third century BCE have been found. Tablets dating from after this period are found across the Greco-Roman world: finds from Olbia near the Black Sea reveal how far afield the practice can be traced by the early fourth century.[64] As noted above, texts in other languages start appearing in the second half of the fourth century BCE, and the earliest curse tablet in Latin, found in a grave in Pompeii, dates to the second century BCE.

At the level of ideas or themes in the texts themselves, there are striking cross-cultural similarities. For example, Katherine McDonald has argued that Greek curse tablets provided a "direct model" for South Oscan curse tablets, which draw very closely in their form and formulae from Greek curse tablets.[65] However, as the initial examples at the beginning of this section illustrate, this should not be taken to mean that there was a single practice. Rather, as McDonald argues, the Oscan texts indicate the "possibility of moving away from those models to create new, local traditions within this genre," an insight shared by other scholars.[66] Evidence for these local variations suggest that

60 See further below; and in this volume, Wilburn, below, Chapter 18.

61 See n. 68 below.

62 Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, 78–81 and 84–86.

63 See also below, Eidinow, Chapter 28.

64 See SGD and NGCT, also A. Avram, C. Chiriac, and I. Matei, "Defixiones d'Istros," *BCH* 131 (2007): 383–420, with S.R. Tokhtas'ev, "A New Curse on a Lead Plate from the North Pontic Region," *ACSS* 15 (2009): 1–3; O. Caloru, "Old and New Magical Inscriptions," *ZPE* 176 (2011): 135–36; A. Belousov and N. Fedoseev, "A New Magical Inscription from Panticapaeum's Necropolis," *ZPE* 190 (2014): 145–48.

65 McDonald, *Oscan in Southern Italy and Sicily*, 134.

66 McDonald, *Oscan in Southern Italy and Sicily*, 165; see Gordon and Simón "Introduction," note that examination of the phraseology of the Latin tablets recently discovered in

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rather than a single practice, curse tablets comprise a family of associated rituals shaped by the needs of local contexts, cultures, communities, or even individuals.[67]

4 Lead and Buried

The use of lead as the medium for these texts was perhaps particularly appropriate because it was cold and grey, like a corpse; indeed, as we will see, some spells do refer to these properties as part of their formulae. But it is also the case that lead was used for other kinds of records and correspondence: it was cheap and plentiful. Jorge J. Bravo III has suggested that the four inscribed lead curse tablets excavated from the Heroön of Opheltes in the Sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea may have been created from lead left over from construction at the site.[68] Sometimes the lead was more elaborately shaped than a simple strip or tablet. From Sicily come tablets that appear to have been intended to represent the part of the body—a foot or a tongue—at which they were aimed (reminiscent of the body-parts unearthed at Aesclepian shrines, used to request or thank the god for healing).[69] Others, such as Text 2 above, were shaped into

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Mainz also indicates that, even if the idea of seeking justice from a god was widespread, "there was a wide spectrum of opinion about how best to realize that goal" and (22) the patchy pattern of this transmission also raises questions.

67 There is evidence that other materials, apart from lead, were used, but few, if any, examples from the Classical period have survived. Wax: *DTA* 55, Plato *Leges*, 933a–c; gold or silver: *PGM* X. 24–35); iron: *PGM* IV. 2145 ff.; linen: *Suppl. Mag.* 1, no. 44; also copper, tin, *ostraca*, limestone, talc, papyrus and gemstones, see *CTBS*, 31, n.5.

68 Suitability of lead: Wünsch, DTA, ii–iii; Lead for other records and correspondence: E. Eidinow and C. Taylor, "To Whom It May Concern: Writing, Communication and Crisis in the Ancient Greek World" *Classical Quarterly* 60 (2010): 30–62; D.R. Jordan, "Two Inscribed Lead Tablets from a Well in the Athenian Kerameikos," *Mitteilungen Des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Athenische Abteilung* 95 (1980): 225–39. As Henk Versnel kindly points out, the fact that a slave probably wrote one of these letters (see E.M. Harris, "Notes on a Lead Letter from the Athenian Agora," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 102 (2004): 157–70 (= *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 104 (2006): 271–79; cf. F.D. Harvey, "'Help! I'm Dying here': A Letter from a Slave," zpe 163 (2007): 49–50) also supports the idea that lead was a common writing material; see also J.J. Bravo III, "Erotic Curse Tablets from the Heroön of Opheltes at Nemea," *Hesperia* 85/1 (2016): 121–52.

69 A tablet shaped like a foot on SGD 87; like a tongue, SGD 86 (L.H. Jeffery, "Further Comments on Archaic Greek Inscriptions," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 50 (1955): 74). See C. Roebuck, *Corinth. Vol. XIV*: *The Asklepieion and Lerna*. (Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1951), 114–28; F.T. van Straten, "Gifts for the gods" in *Faith, Hope and Worship*, ed. H.S. Versnel (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 105–46. The

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figurines, some with mutilated or bound body parts, and occasionally even placed in or near miniature coffins. At Antioch, nine horse-shaped figurines have been found, each inscribed with a name, possibly elements of a binding spell aimed at charioteer teams.[70]

The most obvious explanation for these specially shaped curse tablets is that they were intended to work with analogical power, such that the characteristics of the object on which the spell is written become the characteristics of the spell's target. Indeed, this intention is explicitly stated in some texts (see below). The shaping of the lead is a practice that continues into the Imperial period, and, if anything, becomes far more elaborate. One of the most famous examples is the "Louvre doll," a figurine of a woman on her knees, hands bound behind her back, body pierced with nails in 13 places.[71] But whatever shape the material of the curse took, some sort of ritual activity probably accompanied its physical manufacture, and this probably involved an oral aspect, perhaps a sung or intoned spell. Later evidence certainly suggests this—instructions in the *PGM* for the creation of spells include both spoken and written ritual—but there are also earlier indications. For example, in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, the Furies, acting as the prosecution, sing a *humnos desmios* or "binding song" against the defendant, Orestes, in order, it seems to strike him dumb.[72] If it is a binding-spell, as the scholiast suggests, then it not only precedes the earliest material evidence from Athens, but also indicates an oral tradition of binding. Meanwhile, between these two ends of the chronological spectrum, there are also tablets with spells written in verse, which suggest a performative aspect to their creation.[73]

Once the tablet was inscribed it seems usually to have been folded, nailed through, and buried.[74] Some of the earliest tablets have been found deposited

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practice continues today see, for example, L. Barnes and S. Sered, *Religion and Healing in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 107.

70 *CTBS*, 15; H. Seyrig, "Notes archeologiques," *Berytus* 2 (1935): 48.

71 Discussed further by Wilburn, below, Chapter 18. See P. du Bourguet, "Ensemble magique de la periode romaine en Egypt," *Revue du Louvre* (1975): 255–57 and du Bourguet, "Une ancêtre des figurines d'envoutement percées d'aiguilles, avec ses compléments magiques, au Musée du Louvre" *Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 104 (1980): 225–238.

72 Aeschylus, *Eumenies*, 306 (Faraone, "Aeschylus' *humnos desmios* (*Eum*. 306)," 150–154).

73 For example, DTA 108 in dactylic hexameters, 3rd century BCE.

74 The difficulties of unrolling the lead tablets and trying to read the remains are usefully described in A. Rosenburg, "The Conservation of Lead Curse Tablets," in *The Circus and a Byzantine Cemetery at Carthage*, ed. J.H. Humphrey, vol. 1 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 134–40, R.S.O. Tomlin, "Carta picta perscripta: Anleitung zum

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in graves, others in sanctuaries of gods with underworld associations.[75] These remained popular burial spots throughout the history of the practice of writing curse tablets; manuals among the *PGM* provide explicit instructions to bury spells in such areas.[76] Later material evidence introduces other subterranean locations: for example, sites near water became popular, as the tablets found in the hot springs at Bath testify.[77] As M. Piranomonte has explained, with regard to all the offerings (not just the 22 curse tablets) found in the cistern of the fountain of Anna Perenna at Rome, fountains and springs were viewed as "transition points between two worlds."[78] Later tablets have also been found buried close to the individual or site of the event that the spell concerns: examples of the latter include spells against charioteers buried at or near circuses;[79] while one of the most famous examples of the former is Tacitus' account of the death of Germanicus (Text 6).

Although some scholars have argued that the writing of curse tablets in ancient Greece was probably illegal, there is no explicit evidence for this:

Lesen von Fluchtafeln aus dem römischen Britannien," in Brodersen and Kropp, eds, *Fluchtafeln*, 11–29.

75 Graves: SGD 99, 100 (slightly later 107); during the Imperial period offering pipes were common in Greek graves and provided a convenient way of inserting a curse tablet into a closed grave; see SGD 114.

76 As an example, *PGM* IV. 2210–2215 offers a spell for wrecking chariots: the tablet must be buried "for three days in the grave of someone who died untimely."

77 Wells: Jordan's Athenian Agora texts (D.R. Jordan, "Fourteen Defixiones from a Well in the SW Corner of the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 54 (1985): 205–55); Rivers: Latin curse text found in a river near Hamble, Hampshire, UK, M.W.C. Hassal and R.S.O. Tomlin, "Roman Britain in 1996," *Britannia* 28 (1997): no. 1; Tomlin, "The Curse Tablets"; drain of bath-house, Leintwardine, Herefordshire: R.P. Wright, "Roman Britain in 1968," *Journal of Roman Studies* 59 (1969): 241, no. 31. Bath houses are also popular sites for the performance of magical rituals—because they were thought to be haunted (see C. Bonner, "Demons of the Bath" in *Studies Presented to F. L. Griffith*, ed. S.R.K. Glanville and Nora Macdonald Griffith (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1932), 203–208; other refs at *Suppl. Mag.* 1, pp. 132–33).

78 M. Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome" in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 191–214.

79 SGD 149; also SGD 167, Beirut, Syria, late second or early third century CE, targets horses and drivers of the "Blue team," found near the race-course. Other tablets, not completely read, have been found in Antioch, near the *metae* of the circus (SGD, p. 93) and nine tablets from the amphitheatre in Carthage directed against *venatores* (*DT* 246–54). D.R. Jordan, "New Defixiones from Carthage," in *The Circus and a Byzantine Cemetery at Carthage*, ed. J.H. Humphrey, vol. 1 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 117–34 describes three tablets excavated from the hippodrome in Carthage, each of which seems to curse a charioteer and his horses.

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secrecy and illegality should not be confused.[80] The earliest unequivocal official condemnation of magical practice is the well-known edict from the Twelve Tables, which states that it is illegal to move the crops from another person's field to your own "by magical means" (the Latin is *veneficiis*).[81] Later evidence needs to be considered in the context of wider legislation and its concerns, for example, anxiety over Imperial security.[82] However, it does seem likely that binding spells were buried, in contrast to the apparent treatment of some prayers for justice, which seem to have been put on display in sanctuaries. This includes a number of texts found in the temple of Demeter in Knidos, Karia, dating to the first century BCE,[83] as well as some of the examples found in Britain.[84] Even if (as some of the British evidence suggests), these texts were nailed in such a way that the inscription itself was turned to the wall,[85] it is possible that the process involved in setting up the tablet alerted the wrong-doer to the writer's actions, prompting, perhaps through psychological pressure, the righting of the original wrong.[86] Such a scenario seems to form the background to some of the confession inscriptions found in Lydia and Phrygia, which relate how a crime was made right by the wrongdoer after the victim "submitted a tablet."[87]

80 For example, Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls," 83 (he argues that prayers for justice probably were not); compare Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West," 331 description of prayers for justice and *defixiones* as "sanctioned and unsanctioned," respectively.

81 Servius ad Vergili, *Eclologa*, 8.99 = *XII Tables*, VIII.8 (*FIRA*2) = VIII.4 Crawford; see also J.B. Rives, "Magic in the XII Tables Revisited," *Classical Quarterly* 52 (2002): 270–90.

82 See, for example, D. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

83 *DT* 1–13, although C.T. Newton, *A History of Discoveries at Halicarnassus, Cnidus and Branchidae* (London: Cambridge University Pres, 1862–1863), claims 14 tablets; near remains of a statue of Ceres.

84 http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/RIB/RIBIV/jp4.htm; *TSM*, 84.

85 *TSM*, 101–5.

86 However, not all such tablets were treated as if they were intended to be read, see H.S. Versnel, "Writing Mortals and Reading Gods: Appeal to the Gods as a Dual Strategy in Social Control," in *Demokratie, Recht und soziale Kontrolle im klassischen Athen*, ed. D. Cohen, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs: Kolloquien 49 (Munich: De Gruyter, 2002), 68–72. On the social dynamics that could lead to such resolutions see Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*, esp. 221–23.

87 See E.N. Lane, *Corpus Monumentorum Religionis Dei Menis*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), nos. 58 and 69, and discussion in Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers" and Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West." A useful collection of texts is found in *CTBS*, 176.

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5 Words and Pictures

Some of the earliest binding spells from mainland Greece comprise a list of names. Some include a little further detail; many do not give any further information about the victims. A possible explanation for this list formula returns to the idea of an accompanying oral practice: the writer of the text would inscribe the names of his victims on the tablet, intoning the binding spell that described his intention for them. However, the more detailed written texts of the early fifth century should not be taken as superseding this oral aspect: in ancient Greek texts, the list formula continues until at least the first century CE.[88] Besides, as mentioned above, instructions for binding-spell rituals in the *PGM* suggest a dual approach involving both written and oral aspects. This would reflect similar developments in other areas of Athenian life, as previously spoken activities, such as giving evidence in court or forming contracts, gradually acquired a written dimension.[89] It is even possible that the evolution of the binding practice was a result of direct influence from these other civic spheres: Richard Gordon has argued that the list formulation of the spells draws on an association with lists of names used in other areas of Athenian life.[90] As we will see, other terms in the spell texts also suggest possible influences between civic and supernatural life.

Alongside the lists, several regularly used formulae quickly develop across the Greek corpus, and these have been variously distinguished and categorized by scholars: none of them makes explicit the difference between *defixiones* and prayers for justice.[91] Faraone suggests a direct binding formula, a prayer formula, a wish formula and a "*similia similibus*" (that is, analogical) formula. Amina Kropp's slightly different categories were created with Latin curse tablets in mind, but it will be adopted here because of its insightful consideration

88 In *defixiones* from Selinunte, the list formula appears towards the end of the fifth century, with more elaborate formulae at the beginning (see J. Curbera, "Defixiones," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* Serie IV, Quaderni I (Pisa: 1999), 65). In prayers for justice, the list formula continues well into the Imperial period.

89 See R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). First written contract: Isocrates, 17 *Trapez* .20; earliest evidence for the reading out of written testimony in court around the late 390s: Isaeus, 5.2.

90 R. Gordon, "What's in a List?," in *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4–8 May 1996*, ed. D.R. Jordan, H. Montgomery, and E. Thomassen (Bergen, Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 239–78.

91 E.G. Kagarow, *Griechische Fluchtafeln*, Eos Supplementa 4 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1929), 29–44, C. Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells" and Kropp, *Defixiones*.

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of speech-act theory.[92] Kropp builds on Faraone's work proposing that his direct binding formula should be divided between two types of formulae, a "manipulation formula" and a "committal formula." The manipulation formulas refer to ritual operations performed on the lead tablet, which were understood to have direct effects on the victim. But the manipulation of a tablet may include not only ritual operations that work on the lead tablet, but also those that dedicate it to supernatural powers. Kropp draws a distinction between these two, identifying the "committal formula," which includes not only dedicatory verbs of manipulation, but also verbs of giving/bestowing/transferring.[93] A third formula, the "request formula", encompasses both Faraone's wish formula and his *similia similibus* or analogical category.[94]

Turning to the Greek tablets, the first type of formula includes a verb of action, e.g., binding, coupled with the name and/or aspects (usually body-parts) of the target(s).[95] The verb is often invoked repeatedly with each target or aspect of that target, including body parts (e.g., the tongues of targets, see above, Text 1); work-related items (a workshop or tools); and even abstract entities, such as words and deeds, or the mind or spirit of the victim. Other verbs are used: e.g., spells that "bury" their victim (e.g. *DT* 49, SGD 170), which may be related to the ritualized burying of the curse tablet; while a Latin tablet from Dax says of the person who stole the writer's ring, *immergo* "I submerge (him)," which presumably refers to the submerging of the tablet.[96] In later Greek and many Roman tablets, curse-writers explicitly set their sights on murder—asking not just that their victims be bound, but that they are wholly destroyed

92 As Kropp notes (*Defixiones*, 377–78), her "manipulation formula" (see below) cannot be classified in Searle's original taxonomy; drawing on F. Rambelli, ("Editorial: Sounds for Thought," *Semiotic Review of Books* 4, 2 [1993]: 1–2) she proposes a new category of speech acts: "transformative." See Kropp, *Defixiones*, 370–72, for a table of comparison between the different categories of formulae of different scholars.

93 Kropp, *Defixiones*, 363–64.

94 She also suggests a fourth category of "curse formula," but this includes only one example.

95 καταδέω "I bind" is the most common, but we also find καταδεσμεύω meaning "I bind up," and κατέχω, "I immobilize or restrain." Imperative forms are discussed below in more detail. Some tablets offer subjunctive forms, "let x suffer y," e.g., *DTA* 64, or, turning on the fulfilment of certain conditions, *DTA* 97 and 98.

96 Kropp, *Defixiones*, 361; for the tablet from Dax, see Marco Simón and F. Marco Simón and I. Velázquez "Una nueva defixio aparecida en Dax (Landes)," *Aquitania* 17 (2000): 261–74. In a footnote (18), Kropp notes that "the manipulation is not always manifest in the archaeological context" apart from a few examples. Another example may be a tablet from Theveste in Africa (SGD 136) which declaims of its victim "I cut up all of her quickly, for all time."

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(see Text 5 above)—but it may be that this is also the implicit aim of earlier binding spells.[97]

How directly does the physical act map on to the magical? It has been argued that the "binding" verb was actually short for καταδέω ἥλοις "I fix with nails," linking it to the specific action of nailing the tablet shut.[98] This seems unlikely, since some tablets describe activities of both binding and nailing down, suggesting that the idea of binding had come to describe the overall binding ritual, rather than corresponding directly to the act of nailing.[99] Binding is not so much a metaphor, in which one action is described in terms of another; it is rather a conceptual blend—in which selected elements from different conceptual domains are introduced to produce new meaning. The physical act referred to is not only the manipulation of the tablet but draws into the ritual act a set of ideas from another domain—that of capital punishment. Not only can we argue, as does Kropp, that manipulation formulae were invoked in order to change everyday state of affairs, but we can suggest why those formulae were deemed to be powerful, by examining the frame of reference that organized their meaning. In these spells, I would argue, the appeal to "bind" finds a close counterpart in the state-sanctioned penalties of the judicial process—the binding of capital punishment. As a result of the conceptual blend created by the spell, the spell-writer becomes an agent of civic justice, instituting a process of legitimate punishment against a target who deserves it, and the process is supported or witnessed by the power and authority of a supernatural agent.[100]

If this is the case, then the verb of binding is not only manipulative in the sense that Kropp has suggested. The model of the spell-writer as agent of justice may also explain a conceptual association between binding spells and prayers for justice, if both, in their different ways, were seeking the legitimate punishment of those they saw as their enemies. And the model helps to

97 Rare early examples of the death wish may appear in SGD 89 (second century BCE, Sicily) *DTA* 75 (fourth century BCE, Athens); *DT* 92 (third century BCE, Black Sea), although, as with most curse tablets, the texts are fragmentary and some of the readings speculative. However, these could be early examples of the type of request that occurs more frequently in later texts: *DT* 93a (first century CE, Brigantium), *DT* 129 (mid-second century CE, Arezzo). Versnel points out that this kind of plea is characteristic of (later) prayers for justice: perhaps this is a reminder that these modern categories may not have been as clear-cut for the ancients as they are for modern scholars.

98 Wünsch, *DTA*, iii (cf. Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, 4.71); noted Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 24 n. 24.

99 Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 135–37; cf. also verbs in SGD 48.

100 The conceptual blend (along with the process of conceptual blending itself) is explained in Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*, 243–50.

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explain further the phenomenon of "border area" curses, which exhibit features of both binding spells and prayers for justice.

This interpretation leads in turn to those texts that include a "committal formula": clear examples of the latter include compound verbs of τίθημι and δίδωμι, meaning "I place/give/dedicate," which suggest a "consigning" of the victim to the underworld gods.[101] In some cases, this may indicate the ritual placing of the tablet, with the victim's name on it, in a sanctuary. In later tablets, this gesture may be made more explicit by the addition of some kind of "stuff" (the Greek is οὐσία) from the victim, such as strands of their hair, included in the ritual, perhaps attached to the tablet (as indicated in Text 4, above).[102] The textual details vary: sometimes no god is mentioned as the recipient of the consignment;[103] sometimes a divinity appears in the dative case, or is hailed in the vocative.[104] These dedicatory texts may clearly be understood as prayers for justice. However, formulae that use compounds of γράφω, "I write" raise more complex associations. In Kropp's terms, they describe the manipulation of the physical tablet through the process of writing on it;[105] but it seems likely that they also allude to a "real-world" legal process, insofar as the victim is "being registered" with the god or gods (in some examples "for misfortune" or with more complex meanings).[106] Some tablets exhibit a combination of

101 See discussion in Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 10, for the range of nuances of the different verbs involved; Kropp, *Defixiones,* 362, calls this the "committal formula."

102 Also in the text of a tablet that apparently shows the imprint of hair (SGD 251–255); but SGD 155–56 mention οὐσία *and* hair in the spell.

103 E. g., *DTA* 42, *DT* 84; in *DTA* 55, the victims are consigned "in lead and in wax and in water (?) in unemployment, obscurity, ill-repute, in defeat and in remembrance both these and all the children and wives with whom they live"; SGD 124; NGCT 78.

104 Examples of dedications to gods in the dative case: *DT* 1–14, from the temple of Demeter, at Knidos; the gods are usually Demeter and Persephone, but sometimes other chthonian deities are mentioned; see also *DT* 86 where the divine recipients are in the dative case. On *DTA* 100, the text addresses *Hermes Katochos* and entrusts him with watching over the writer's enemies and their actions.

105 See *DTA* 55, which lists the different media ("in lead and in wax and in water") in which the victim is "assigned" (the verb is καταδίδωμι), suggesting physical actions by the writer. However, the text goes on to list abstract properties, including "in obscurity, in ill-repute, in defeat," perhaps indicating the simultaneous metaphysical nature of the statement.

106 For καταγράφω as "register or enroll" see LSJ II.2. SGD 91 appears to use the verb ἀπογράφω with a variety of different nuances (see discussion *OCR* 146). Although mention of a divinity in this formulation is, among extant examples, rarely made. Tablets with compounds of γράφω include SGD 88, 91, 99, 101, 107, 109, and NGCT 66 from Sicily; *DT* 47 (Piraeus, Athens), NGCT 46 (Arethousa, Thessaloniki), *DT* 84 and 85 (Boeotia, Thebes), *DT* 87 (Corcyra, Epirus), SGD 58 (Delos), SGD 64 (Karystos, Euboea), NGCT 23; NGCT 38 (Pydna); Phila's tablet from Pella in Macedonia (Voutiras, *Dionysophontos gamoi*).

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verbs, indicating the different processes (physical and metaphorical manipulations) that were involved in their creation and the ways in which the ritual draws on particular conceptual frames for its power. Thus, the writer of NGCT 23 wants success for "the things I write down (καταγράφω) and which I entrust (παρατίθημι) to you."[107]

In the Greek tablets with formulae that use a verb of binding or consignment, supernatural figures are most often invoked in phrases using the preposition πρός + the name(s) of the god(s). Different translations give different interpretations of this phrase: Faraone describes the supernatural presence in these texts as "witnesses or overseers of the act," translating it as "in the presence of," and suggests that the phrasing may be influenced by contemporary legal and business transactions.[108] However, others argue that the phrase should be translated as "down to," meaning that the victim is delivered to the gods. This is a parallel to phrases found in Latin curse tablets, in which victims are frequently consigned or dedicated "to gods."[109] It may be that ideas about the

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Those not mentioning the gods include: *DT* 47, 84, 87 (very fragmentary); in *DT* 85 (as read by Ziebarth, "Neue Verfluchungstafeln aus Attika, Boiotien und Euboia," no. 23) the spell itself is registered. SGD 88, the victims are "registered" 'ἐπὶ δυσπραγ[ίαι] "for misfortune"', but not to any particular god; SGD 99 ("I inscribe"); SGD 101; SGD 124 ("written on the tablet"), NGCT 23 (but see further below), 38 and 66. God named at the beginning of the text: SGD 58; SGD 64 uses πρός and the name of the god Hermes; while SGD 107, found in the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros at Gaggara (i.e., Selinus) uses παρά. SGD 109 includes the phrase "of her I write the letter," discussed further below. See also a curse text from Kenchreai, third century CE, which registers the victim before Violence, Fate and Necessity (see Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West," 317 and 319) and Phila's tablet from Pella in Macedonia (Voutiras, *Dionysophontos gamoi*) where she writes the spell and then entrusts it to Makron.

107 Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West," 317–19. discusses these two verbs in the context of Phila's text (see Voutiras, *Dionysophontos gamoi*): he suggests that this is a prayer for justice, because it is only the verb of binding that indicates it can be considered a binding spell. However, if binding also has connotations of a civic process that seeks justice this may lead us better to understand the associations made by the writer of the curse.

108 Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 5.

109 Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 125 and Kropp, *Defixiones*, 362–63. In the process of deciding between the two interpretations, it is worth bearing in mind that in some of these Greek tablets we find an individual bound or consigned (πρός +god's name), several times, to a number of different gods: does such a series of individual recipients pose a problem for the process of dedication? This problem occurs again in a slightly different form in SGD 150, where Praxidike is asked to bind the victim, πρός Tyche, Zeus and the Charites—could a victim be bound by one supernatural figure while being dedicated to others? In the Latin tablets, the gods who are recipients of dedicated victims tend to appear in the dative case, with no preposition; gods plural tend to be addressed as a group, "the gods of the underworld." In the Greek tablets, straightforward assignment to

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consignment of a victim changed over time, under different influences and in different contexts. For example, where Greek spell writers may have sought a witness for the act of inscribing their victims, the Latin spell writers seem more frequently to have been influenced by, and used formula that evoked, the language of dedication.[110] Other specific influences can be traced: for example, a curse from Alexandria, Egypt, appears to draw on legal terminology, using the language of orders for arrest and delivery (as recorded in the documentary papyri) to present its target to the chthonic powers.[111] Certain ideas may nevertheless be common to these approaches: in particular, the idea of a god taking some kind of responsibility for the outcome of the curse—sometimes accompanied by a notion of literal proximity of victim to god.[112] In those "border area" curses that entail a plea for justice as well as binding formulae, the guilty person, or a stolen item, is sometimes explicitly handed over in such a way that the crime becomes the god's problem—and its resolution a matter of divine pride.[113]

It is not just gods that are invoked: the dead are also present. In general, pre-Imperial Greek curses address their main invocation to chthonian gods, invoking the dead as witnesses or in analogies that emphasize their powerlessness.[114] But in later spells, especially those found in Egypt, the dead

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gods in the dative case does occur, but alongside use of πρός + the name of a different god, which suggests a different kind of relationship is being invoked (e.g., *DT* 69, but this text is very fragmentary). Finally, we find that in NGCT 89, a rare bilingual tablet, the dative form in Latin is matched by a dative form in Greek, rather than use of πρός.

110 E.g. Text 5 above, where the god is addressed in the dative; NGCT 89, see Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 125–26, and Kropp, *Defixiones*, 362.

111 *Suppl. Mag.* 2, no. 54 (Alexandria, Egypt, 3rd century CE): ll. 21–22, comm.; Similar wording is used in orders for arrest and delivery in the documentary papyri, e.g., *P.Hib*. I 54, 20–22.

112 This may be made explicit in SGD 64, which registers its victim πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῆ, and then asks that she be bound near him; and in SGD 108, where the text describes how the victim will be bound in murky Tartaos "with Hekate of the underworld." Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 126, notes that different formulas have "more or less the same function … the victim is still delivered to Hermes, who details (therefore his epithet) him by tying up his limbs."

113 H.S. Versnel terms this "cession" and notes its difference from the votive style of offering, found, for example, in SGD 173 (and much rarer). It is particular common in prayers for justice (especially the tablets found in Britain), see Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers," and Tomlin, "The Curse Tablets," 118–19. Victim as gift also occurs in curse tablets SGD 54 (see Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 24, n. 15) and 109.

114 For example, *DT* 43, 44, which address "Pasianax" (perhaps the corpse with which the tablet was buried) and ask that (*DT* 43 and 44, ll. 6–7) "just as you, O Pasianax lie, useless (*DT* 44 and nothing) here" the victim(s) also be (*DT* 43, ll. 7–8; *DT* 44, ll. 8–10) 'as useless

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play a far more active role: as with Text 4, above, these curses clearly expect the dead to enjoy easier access to, and exert greater power over, the world of the living.[115] It seems likely that they were understood to belong to one of three categories likely to make them suitably restless: they are either *biaiothanatoi* (dead by violence), *ataphoi* or *atelestoi* (unburied or not properly attended to in death), or *aoroi* (untimely dead); for examples see Texts 3 and 4 above.[116] They usually remain anonymous, although not always (one late papyrus even features a drawing of the mummified corpse it addresses).[117] These later dead have also, one might say, changed their form of manifestation. That is, they are now addressed as—or alongside (see below, it is not always clear)—*daimones*, and from this throng of intermediary beings the spells often single out a particular *nekudaimon* ("corpse-daimon") to carry out the instruction of the spell. Why *daimones*? Plato's Diotima can offer some guidance: she tells us that *daimones* were regarded as supernatural messengers who impinged on mortals with divine permission. Through them, she says, mankind is able to practice divination, priestly art, sacrifices, initiations, spells, divining and *goeteia* ("sorcery")—they provide the route of communication with the gods.[118]

The later binding spells suggest that in some contexts the dead were taking on some of these *daimonic* aspects, creating a hybrid creature that was

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and be nothing' and *DT* 52 (ll. 1–9) "Kerkis, Blastos, Nikandros, Glykera. I bind Kerkis, both his words and the deeds of Kerkis and his tongue, before those youths who died unmarried, and whenever they recognize these words, then will be the time for Kerkis to speak" (i.e, never). But this is not always the case: SGD 173 (3rd–1st century BCE) appears to expect the unknown figure that the tablet addresses to restrain the victims of the curse: is this the corpse with which the tablet is buried (the formula of address is similar to that found in *DT* 43), or could it be some other anonymous supernatural entity?

115 *Suppl. Mag.* 2, no. 53. (SGD 151).

116 For the changing role of the underworld gods, and the dead, see discussion in Johnston, *Restless Dead* and S.I. Johnston, "Songs for the Ghosts: Magical Solutions to Deadly Problems," in *The World of Ancient Magic*, 83–102, where she seems to argue for an earlier active role for the dead (but on this aspect see *OCR* 148–50).

117 *Suppl. Mag.* 1, no. 37 (SGD 158–159) the corpse's name is Horion, son of Sarapous, named on the first of two tablets that originally formed a diptych; *Suppl. Mag.* 1, no. 47 (SGD 152) the corpse is Antinous, perhaps the friend of the emperor Hadrian; and *Suppl. Mag.* 1, no. 50 (SGD 156) where the name was added between the lines (some editors have preferred to see it as an instruction from the formulary that was miscopied by the writer of this spell).

118 J. Winkler in "The Constraints of Eros," in *Magika Hiera*, 214–243 observes the similarities between demons and dreams in *agogai* (and remember the demon that is sent to Xerxes in Herodotus, 7.12–18); Plato, *Symposium*, 202 E.

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restless and demanding, and could act on instructions.[119] We can identify some influences that may have played a part in these developments: for example, as David Frankfurter and Jacco Dieleman have emphasized, the texts from Egypt were composed within a cultural background of Egyptian temple ritual.[120] This included the practice of "letters to the dead," in which a dead person, addressed by name, was asked to carry out a particular instruction. However, tracing the path of such influences demands extreme care: parallel practices of addressing or involving a corpse should not lead us to assume the simple influence of one practice on another.[121]

Nor is the structure of this new supernatural bureaucracy straightforward. For example, in Text 4 above, the *daimones* seem to be expected to help the corpse-*daimon* to carry out its tasks. They appear listed alongside gods and various representatives of the untimely dead, but it is not clear whether they are to be considered as a separate supernatural constituency. Compare the invocations on *DT* 22 and 25, tablets from Amathous in Cyprus, dating to the late second or third century CE.[122] The texts are very similar, both calling on a range of *daimones*, including "those under the earth" (chthonian powers?), "*daimones* whoever you may be," "you who lie here" (the restless dead of the burial ground?), and "the king of the *daimones*," asking him to work in the writer's favor. In both, it is far from clear whether this address indicates separate groups—and, if so, how they might have been related. The spell on *DT* 25 does address one *daimon* "who lies here," presumably the body with whom the curse tablet is to be buried—but it also invokes the wordlessness (they are called "just as you are.... wordless and speechless") and powerlessness of these spirits, which suggests that it is unlikely that any particular *daimon* could

119 For the changing role of demons in antiquity, and insights this may offer into the changing structure and nature of beliefs, see J.Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity" in *ANRW* II 16.1 (1978): 425–39.

120 D. Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. P. Schafer and H. Kippenberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 115–35, Frankfurter, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10.3–4 (2001): 480–500 and Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*.

121 See in particular Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 90–94, and C. Faraone, "The Ethnic Origins of a Roman-Era *Philtokatadesmos* (*PGM* IV 296–434)," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 319–43, in which he assesses the level and nature of the influence of Egyptian "letters to the dead" on the family of five texts that appear to draw on *PGM* IV.335–406.

122 See *CTBS* 45 and 46.

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be considered to be an active supernatural agent capable of carrying out the writer's instructions.[123]

These examples of invocations bring us to Kropp's third type of formula, the "request" type, which involves appeals to supernatural powers, encompassing wishes and persuasive analogies.[124] Across the corpus of curses, appeals to supernatural powers take a variety of forms: those asking the gods for help appear in the fifth century but are particularly common in Attic curse tablets, especially of the fourth century. The gods involved are usually chthonian deities, such as Persephone, Ge, Hermes the Binder and Hekate. They are addressed in a variety of ways: imperative forms are found in both Greek and Latin curses;[125] sometimes the imperative appears alongside the writer's own claim "I bind."[126]

123 The nature of the *nekudaimon* or corpse-daimon needs closer attention. Although it receives instruction in a number of spells, it is not always clear that the corpse-*daimon* and *daimon* that will act out the instructions of the curse are the same. One text, written in ink on a lead tablet, even instructs the *nekudaimon* to rouse its *daimon*, which suggests that the latter was a separate entity from the former (*Suppl. Mag.* 1, no. 39; SGD 160). Later, as Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 292) has pointed out, the Christians will begin to merge the identity of (pagan) gods and *daimons*—bringing to birth the demon of modern imagination. This last point provides us, perhaps, with some sense of how to think about this bewildering supernatural workforce. Rather than expecting them to provide a neat organisational chart of the underworld, we should perhaps view the problems of personnel that these texts present as offering us a sense of the diversity of popular beliefs and their development in different contexts over time.

124 "Persuasive analogy": this term was coined by S.J. Tambiah in an analysis of magical action: "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View," in *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies*, ed. R. Horton and R. Finnegan (London: Faber, 1973), 212; for its relevance to ancient ritual, see discussion in Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 205–233, in particular of the identity of the person being persuaded (209–210): "The magic rite thus seems to short-circuit the communication: the sender and the recipient are identical," 210). Discussion of this aspect in Latin curse tablets in Kropp, *Defixiones*.

125 E.g., the verbs ὁρκίζω and ἐξορκίζω "I adjure": the formula "I adjure you by so-and-so" enters the Greek magical tradition in the first century CE, appearing in the curse tablets from North Africa e.g., *DT* 235, 240, 243, 237, 241 and see Text 4, above. The phrase originates in Jewish rituals of exorcism: see Faraone, "The Ethnic Origins of a Roman-Era Philtokatadesmos," 328, n. 28 (who draws on Martinez, *Michigan Papyri XVI*, 69–73 and R. Kotansky, "Greek Exorcistic Amulets," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1995), 243–77 for details and further references. See discussion, Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 124.

126 Greek examples: (singular, κάτεχε), *DTA* 88, 89, SGD 75, (plural κατέχετε) *DT* 50, SGD 81, *DTA* 102) all using the verb κατέχω—rarely found used by the mortal agent of a curse (exception *DTA* 109); see also SGD 118–121. Latin: *DT* 250. Imperative alongside writer's claim to bind: *DTA* 88 and 89, *DTA* 109. Verbs of command (to the gods) are not found in Greek or Latin curses (A. Kropp, "How Does Magical Language Work? The Spells and Formulae of the Latin Defixionum Tabellae," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 366).

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Other examples show more indirect approaches to the gods: for example, two Greek texts address the gods in the vocative, and then make their appeal in a passive third-person form ("let him be bound").[127] A text on a tablet from Uley includes an elaborate phrasing to couch a request to the gods ("I would ask … that you (Mercury) do not allow him … health"); more frequently found are curses formulated as wishes: e.g., "May x suffer y."[128]

These bring us, finally, to persuasive analogies, which ask to transfer to the victim the characteristics of something mentioned in the spell.[129] This verbal technique might include the corpse with which the tablet is (presumably) buried (*DT* 68) or the lead on which the spell is written (*DTA* 105), or the way the curse tablet itself has been set apart.[130] Some spell texts were inscribed with scrambled letters, or written backwards, and these adjustments are then mentioned in the spell as the desired effect that the spell will have on the target's thoughts, words or deeds.[131] This kind of analogical spell-making may also explain the more elaborate shapes of some curse tablets, as described earlier: in particular the dolls, or even doll/coffin sets. It also helps to explain the use of animals in spells: a particularly famous example is the mutilated chameleon found in the walls of the orator Libanius' study. (Once removed, he recovered from a malaise that had prevented him from public speaking, working or teaching.) But there are other instances in the corpus of curse tablets, including a dead puppy mentioned in a tablet from late second century Gaul ("just as this puppy is turned on its back and is unable to rise, so neither may they …").[132]

Over time, further features developed to accompany these formulae: binding spells become increasingly syncretistic, revealing the influence of a wide range of other cultures, including Latin, Greek, Coptic, Hebrew, Egyptian, and Babylonian.[133] Foreign words and names of gods appear, and sometimes other material that was ritually powerful for a particular community. A curse written on a marble stele, from the island of Rheneia, includes allusions to biblical passages from the Septuagint LXX; this may indicate a Jewish or Samaritan

127 The passive third-person singular perfect imperative, in *DTA* 105 and 106.

128 Kropp, *Defixiones*, 366; *AE* 1992: 1197 (trans. Kropp) and wishes: *DT* 227 and *AE* 1994, 1072.

129 Faraone's so-called *similia similibus* formulae.

130 DT 85, according to Ziebarth, "Neue Verfluchungstafeln aus Attika, Boiotien und Euboia," 21–22, no. 23, the phrase is: "just as this lead is in a certain place separate from men, in the same way let Zoilos be kept in another place from Antheira."

131 *DTA* 65 and 67.

132 Puppy: *DT* 111–12; Chameleon: Libanius, *Orationes*, 1.245–49.

133 As Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 10: it is important to note that these formulae do not develop chronologically; indeed, they may be found together on the same tablet. Syncretism: Faraone, "The Ethnic Origins of a Roman-Era *Philtokatadesmos*," 343.

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origin (since there were both communities living on the island).[134] Egyptian influences are probably responsible for the introduction of some *voces magicae*, seemingly meaningless words or long strings of particular vowels or consonants, which start to appear frequently in ritual texts, including curses, from around the 1st century CE (although they were known earlier, see below).[135]

Alongside nonsense words, "magical images" (*figurae magicae*) which often illustrate and echo the words of the spell, start to appear in this later material.[136] For example, a second century CE erotic binding spell written on papyri binds its target "to the tail of the snake and to the mouth of the crocodile and the horns of the ram and the poison of the asp and the whiskers of the cat and the forepart of the god"[137] and then includes images, including the god holding a staff, a snake, crocodile, cat, and ram, and a woman, presumably the female target of the curse. It seems likely that these drawings were meant to reinforce the efficacy of the spell.[138] This may also be true of the *charaktēres*: these symbols, somewhere between words and pictures, seem to have embodied great mystical protective power, although their exact nature and purpose is unknown (they may have had an astrological source). They appear in a range of documents from the second century CE onwards, not only in binding spells but also formularies for divination, amulets, and also Gnostic writings.[139]

6 Writers and Targets

The longer, more elaborate, syncretistic spells described above were probably created by experts, and their development seems to indicate that at least in some areas there was gradual specialisation of binding spell practice during the Imperial period. The evidence suggests that collections of magical spells were first made in the Hellenistic period, but, as that material shows, this does

134 *CTBS*, 187, no. 87.

135 Demetrius, *On Style*, ch. 71 notes the singing of vowels by Egyptian priests (further references in *CTBS*, 34). In general on these verbal techniques see below, Frankfurter, Chapter 22.

136 Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri," 3442.

137 *Suppl. Mag.* 1, no. 38 (SGD 161).

138 *CTBS*, 11–12, who also points out the growing significance of religious imagery in late antiquity.

139 *CTBS*, 10–11 (SGD 21 and 162); see *PGM* VII. 195 for instructions about the *charaktēres* to be used. See further on *charaktēres*, D. Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic," 205–211, and below, Chapter 23; and H.S. Versnel, "Writing Mortals and Reading Gods", and the Charakteres project (https://charakteres.com).

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not make for cross-cultural uniformity in creation or product.[140] Christopher Faraone has argued that the *PGM* (specifically, the Anastasi papyri), while perhaps representative of the collection, transmission and performance of magical spells in late-antique Egypt, should not lead us to assume that magical spells were collected, transmitted and performed in this way in other parts of the ancient world.[141] Focusing in turn on the Egyptian material, the relationship between Greek and Egyptian practices has been much debated. While there are significant factors that may associate Demotic and Greek texts, there are key differences: Jacco Dieleman draws attention to the ways in which Demotic spells are "clearly rooted in a long tradition of Egyptian text production," while "the Greek spells have an unmistakable Hellenistic character."[142]

It is possible, indeed probable, that professionals (on commission) also wrote some of the earlier curse texts. This is suggested by archaeological evidence that includes caches of unused dolls or hoards of blank tablets, or tablets written in the same hand or using repetitive formulae.[143] Literary evidence offers further support: Plato's reference to *katadesmoi* appears as part of a description of the itinerant salesmen of supernatural services, who "knock on the doors of the Athenian wealthy and offer to expiate current and ancestral sins, or cause harm to an enemy."[144] In turn, non-specialists were surely continuing to write curse tablets throughout these periods, as well. It might

140 C. Faraone, "Handbooks and Anthologies: The Collection of Greek and Egyptian Incantations in Late Hellenistic Egypt," *ARG* 2 (2001): 195–214.

141 Faraone, "Handbooks and Anthologies," 195–6. See Dieleman, above, Chapter 13.

142 See further Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*, 288–89. R. Ritner has argued that the Greek and Demotic texts were both shaped by the pharaonic tradition; scholars of Greek culture have suggested that this overemphasizes the Egyptian aspect. See for example, R. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and their Religious Context," *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995): 3333–79; cf. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 5 and C. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 35–36.

143 From Tell Sandahannah (Palestine) a cache of 16 bound lead figurines—some complete with features (hair, sexual aspects, navels etc.)—most with bound hands and feet, which commentators have suggested may have been the "unused supply of a local magos" (*CTBS* 205). Blank tablets: *DT* 109 (Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 4–5 and n. 19. Similar handiwork: see *DT* 18–21 and P. Aupert and D.R. Jordan, "Magical inscriptions on talc tablets from Amathous," *American Journal of Archaeology* 85 (1981): 184; SGD 22 and 23; Jordan also argues that one person made four lead figurines found in the Kerameikos (see Jordan, "New Archaeological Evidence for the Practice of Magic in Classical Athens," in *Praktika of the 12th International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Athens, September 4–10, 1983*, vol. 4 [Athens: The Congress, 1988], 273–77). Text 5 from Uley appears to have been written by the same hand as a tablet from Bath (Hassall and Tomlin, "Roman Britain in 1988").

144 Plato, *Respublica*, 364c–e.

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be argued that the use of first-person verb forms ("I bind") in spell texts offers support for this suggestion, but it is likely that professionalised spell sellers and model texts would also employ these phrases. More compelling are examples of highly unformulaic and individualistic phraseology, which suggest an "uncodified" approach. A Greek example of both these features is found in a binding spell written by a woman called Phila, which was found in Macedonia, and sets out to bind, first, the marriage of Thetima and Dionysophon, and then the relationship of any woman, widowed or maiden, with Dionysophon. The spell is written in the first person (it is one of the few pre-Imperial spells in which the writer gives her own name) and gradually devolves into an anguished pleading with the gods for their pity and help.[145] Similarly, turning to a Roman context, the formulae of the Mainz tablets, which combine plain language with idiosyncratic phrasing, especially analogies, suggest to J. Blänsdorf, that "these texts, or at any rate most of them, were not written by professional sorcerers or their scribes, but by private individuals"; he also posits that these were educated people from the middle or even upper classes, able to compose these texts without professional help.[146]

My use of the term uncodified, above, to describe unprofessional curse-writers is not meant to suggest that in other contexts these materials would have gone through some type of official standardisation, or that other practitioners were (or even could be) somehow regarded as "licensed."[147] Rather, the evidence suggests that binding is an example of a *self-regulating practice*, which gradually, over time, acquired a recognisable set of characteristics. Thinking of parallel unregulated professions, ancient as well as modern, we can speculate that it was the claim of ownership of the appropriate knowledge and compelling demonstration of it, rather than the approval of an external body, that endowed practitioners and their products with legitimacy.[148] The spells of the *PGM* certainly appear to contain "marketing" statements, included to persuade the reader of their power and efficacy.[149] Perhaps, one of those characteristics was that those who claimed, and were perceived to possess the requisite expertise might develop the practice, further developing those distinctive

145 Voutiras, *Dionysophontos gamoi*.

146 J. Blänsdorf, "The *Defixiones* from the Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 141–90.

147 E.g., as R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 116: "unlicensed free enterprise religion"; and 133: "unlicensed religious professionals."

148 For example, from our own time, management consultants, therapists and counsellors. For discussion of some examples of the sharing of spell recipes and rituals, see Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," 220–21.

149 See discussion by Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues and Rites*, 254–84.

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characteristics.[150] We should perhaps be prepared to recognize a range of status among the writers, including amateurs and professionals, but also those in more ambiguous positions.

However, this model still leaves open the question of the identity of those who wrote or commissioned most of these texts. This is difficult to answer since, for the most part, binding-spells on tablets and in papyri give us very little information about their writers. From the pre-Imperial period, for example, there are only around six Greek curse tablets that include the name of the writer.[151] Instead, information about curse-writers tends to be drawn from details in the texts that concern their victims—and these famously embrace most if not all aspects of ancient Greek society, from prostitutes to politicians, and everyone in between.[152] It might be easier to try to identify the context in which binding spells were used; but caution is needed here, too. In terms of the Greek material, in addition to the border-area curses, most scholars use the following four categories: i) *judicial*: spells written in the context of the law courts, and usually identified by legal terminology;[153] ii) *commercial*: binding spells directed not just at individuals but also invoked against the workplace, labour, products and income;[154] iii) *performance*: ranging from choregic to theatrical to sporting events;[155] iv) *erotic*: both spells of restraint or *Trennungszauber*, which seek to separate couples (e.g., Text 3 above), and (like Text 4), those which are intended to bring couples together (*agogai*).[156]

These useful categories do allow for observations to be made about the cultural development of the use of binding, and prompt some ideas about the likely motivations of their writers. As such, in most studies, scholars have tended to combine these categories with the theory that binding spells are written in situations of competition—and are intended, by their writers, to neutralize particular rivals in these particular contexts.[157] Nevertheless, keeping

150 As S.I. Johnston, "Sacrifice in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World,* 344–58, esp. 346 has speculated with regard to the development of spells in the *PGM*.

151 *OCR*, 146–47, esp. n. 16.

152 Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls," 67–71.

153 This is the largest category of binding tablets from the classical period.

154 The earliest have been dated to the fifth century, but most cluster in the third century BCE, and they tend to disappear after the Hellenistic period.

155 There are four dating to the pre-Imperial period; this type becomes far more popular in the Imperial period.

156 Pre-Imperial erotic binding spells tend to be *Trennungszauber*, that is, "separation" spells, which concentrate on restraining rivals. (A single spell from this period, from Macedonia, can be described as an attraction spell, or *agoge*), see *OCR*, 213.

157 Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells."

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too closely to these categories risks an approach that may blind us to the range of motivations and social situations in which the use of binding spells may have been thought appropriate.[158] What follows are a couple of examples of ways in which we might interrogate these widely held categories, focusing first on judicial binding spells, and then looking at commercial binding spells.

The most agonistic of contexts, the Athenian law court, is usually evoked as the setting for judicial, often politically motivated, duels between elite individuals. However, the binding spells themselves suggest an expansion of this traditional picture. Many of the texts that contain judicial terms appear to be concerned with teams of litigants, rather than individuals.[159] In some texts the teams appear to be a of a limited number, and this may indicate a private suit in which a small group of individuals had joined forces; in other texts, far more litigants seem to be involved (in one rare case, over forty are listed) and this may indicate a *graphē*, in which numerous speakers might play a variety of parts.[160] But those who wrote these texts were not simply concerned with those who would speak in court: they also target other players in the court—some more surprising than others. These include informers (*menutai*[161]), witnesses (*martures*[162]) and even judges (*dikastai*[163]), but also women[164] and those "who stood around,"[165] who appear to be observers in the court who supported particular litigants.[166] The inclusion of this wide range of figures in these judicial binding spells suggests that legal action involved far more of the community than the traditional picture evokes, including networks of friends and supporters, male and female. These spells provide evidence for the experience of going to court: although competition may have been at the heart of a legal case, the targets of these texts—informers, witnesses, judges, friends and supporters—are not sources of competition, they are sources of risk.

158 *OCR* and E. Eidinow, "Why the Athenians Began to Curse," in *Debating the Athenian Cultural Revolution: Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Politics 430–380 BC*, ed. R. Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 44–71.

159 See Rubinstein, *Litigation and Cooperation*, esp. ch. 3.

160 Over 40 litigants can be found in SGD 42.

161 *DTA* 67.

162 *DT* 87, *DTA* 25, 65, 68a, 94 (see also μαρτυρία *DT* 49, 89b, SGD 173 [this may be a personal letter]; μαρτυρέω SGD 89; μαρτύρομαι *DT* 63.

163 *DTA* 65, 67; NGCT 46.

164 Some appear simply in lists of names: SGD 10, *DTA* 24, NGCT 50; in tablets including judicial terms: NGCT 10, *DTA* 39, *DTA* 67, *DTA* 68, 95 and 106.

165 The phrase is found in SGD 176; similar phrases in *DTA* 79 and *DT* 67.

166 See A. Chaniotis, "Watching a Lawsuit: A New Curse Tablet from South Russia," *GRBS* 33 (1992): 69–73 and A.M. Lanni, "Spectator Sport or Serious Politics? οἱ περιεστηκότες and the Athenian lawcourts," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 117 (1997): 183–89.

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Different kinds of questions are raised by those binding spells that include business-related details and so tend to be categorized as "commercial" and to be concerned allegedly with commercial competition. Taking as our starting point the fact that (as mentioned above) any information about business in the text tends to be related to the target of the spell not the writer, there are a number of texts where such details could plausibly be explained apart from commercial competition.[167] For example, a target's profession may have been included in the text so as to help the gods to identify their victim correctly. In SGD 52, four victims are named and described: two are identified by their patronymics and demes, and two by their professions (both are netmakers). Although it is possible that this information was included because these two were commercial rivals of the spell-writer, it is equally plausible that their *technitika* were included because they did not have a demotic like the first two, and the writer wanted to find some way of describing them in more detail.[168] This explanation works particularly well for some puzzling tablets that list myriad individuals in a range of professions.[169] For example, *DTA* 68 attacks a miller, tavern/shop-keepers, a boxer and a pimp, as well as a number of prostitutes. In such cases straightforward business rivalry is unlikely—after all, what advantage could there be in seeking the commercial failure of so many people involved in so many different professions? For this tablet, another explanation for the motivation behind this spell may be suggested by the appearance of τοὺς μάρτυρας "the witnesses" in line 10; perhaps these characters all represented some kind of judicial threat.

These questions are not intended to deny the usefulness of "competition" as a basis for understanding some curses, but as a reminder that these texts

167 For a full analysis of the texts usually categorized as "commercial" and assumed to be motivated by commercial competition, see *OCR*, chapter 10. All the texts discussed in this section have been categorized as commercial in previous scholarship: for a list of those texts deemed to be part of this category see *OCR*, 322, n. 4.

168 *DTA* 55 also provides the professions of some targets, and the patronymics and demotics of others; for two he provides all this information. SGD 48 provides a further example, with three columns of mostly male names, some identified with demotics (abbreviated), one with his place of origin, one with his profession; the final column includes the names of four women and a man, qualified with λαικάστρια, an abusive term for a prostitute.

169 See also *DTA* 87; SGD 11, 20. 42, which offer examples of individuals described in terms of their profession with no attention paid to other aspects of their commercial lives. But even where texts are included which mention details of work (*ergasia*) as well as names and professions, why should this indicate commercial competition rather than a detailed malevolence towards the targets?

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reflect the complex social dynamics between individuals.[170] As an example, consider Text 3, above, *DT* 68, which a number of scholars have categorized as commercial.[171] The text certainly contains some commercial detail: on one side of the tablet, in the first half of the text, it refers to Theodora's ἐργασία, her business, as well as her ἔργα καὶ ἔπη, her words and deeds (also mentioned in the text quoted from the second half of the text on side B). Despite these commercial details, the main thrust of the spell in fact seems to be aimed at destroying the relationships of its target, Theodora. It may be that work and relationships were linked in this case; indeed, it has been argued that the writer of the text was a rival courtesan, jealous of Theodora's successful trade.[172] Erotic competition might be an equally valid explanation: the writer may well have been a woman in any one of a number of relationships with Charias, who saw Theodora as a threat. Alternatively, since there is no element of the text that indicates the gender of the creator of the spell, the writer may have been male, and motivated by desire not for Theodora but for Charias, which would also explain the spell's request to make Charias forget his desire for Theodora (Side B, ll. 10–11). Perhaps, rather than examining this text for signs of *commercial* competition, we should be looking for other feelings of ill-will or even hostility.

Indeed, there are a number of texts that indicate that binding spells may have been one recourse in situations where social relations had simply broken down.[173] For example, in *DTA* 87, the writer describes some of his many targets as neighbours: should we be looking to this tablet for information about the nature of community dynamics, rather than competition between businesses? In the spectrum of hostile feelings that might have motivated one Greek to have "bound" another a particular possibility is that most virulent of ancient Greek emotions: φθόνος or "envy."[174] This is further explored in another chapter of this volume, but it is worth noting here that exploring a dynamic such as φθόνος might help us to refine the idea of competition as a motivating force for the creation of binding spells: individuals were not only competing for the

170 Nor is this an attempt to argue that curse tablets are written simply from a position of uncertainty (contra Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West," 325).

171 Identified as an example of a commercial curse by Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 27, n. 47.

172 M.W. Dickie, "Who Practised Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and in the Late Roman World?," *Classical Quarterly* 50.2 (2000): 576.

173 For example, *DTA* 98, 100, 103, 158, SGD 58, NGCT 14 and 23, where the threat of the opponent appears to be ongoing, rather than in the past, as in true "prayers for justice." Plato's doorstep salesmen offer spells to harm an enemy (rather than a competitor (Plato, *Respublica,* 364c–e). See also Eidinow, "Why the Athenians Began to Curse."

174 See further Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*; and below, Eidinow, Chapter 28.

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same prize, but they were also determined to prevent their neighbours from achieving it—and felt justified in doing so.

7 Ideas for Further Work: Transmission and Motivation

Curse tablets, both prayers for justice and binding spells, tell us not only about ritual practices, but also about other aspects of the societies and communities in which those practices took place. To that end, continued attention to the categorisation of the texts in this growing corpus is invaluable, helping to identify and distinguish what seem, to our sensibilities at least, to be different classes of ritual practice and formulae. And these different classes prompt consideration of two avenues of further work: first, the implications of those findings for understanding the nature of cultural transmission, as practices appear to move between communities over time; and, second, the insights these texts may provide into relationships within communities, between individuals.[175] On the first point, we can look both within and beyond the Mediterranean. In terms of the latter, this essay has mentioned some of the work that has been done to examine the influence of Egyptian ritual practices on binding spells, and vice versa. The binding spells on papyri also reveal interactions with Jewish and Near Eastern ritual practices. Christopher Faraone has explored the influences of Near Eastern spells for erotic binding spells, and his work suggests a rich seam to be mined, with further work to be done in tracing imagery, approaches and formulations found in aggressive and apotropaic rituals from the Near East and the texts of the corpus of Greco-Roman binding spells. In addition, recent work on oath formulae in Near Eastern texts suggests that there are similarities and differences in formulae and approach to be traced between these and Greco-Roman oath curses.[176] In terms of the former, the number of binding spells found across territories within the Mediterranean

175 See Voutiras, *Dionysophontos gamoi* for a particularly successful example of this approach.

176 For example, A.M. Kitz, "An Oath, A Curse and Anointing Ritual," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 2 (2004): 315–21 and M.R. Bacharova, "Oath and allusion in Alcaeus fr. 129," in *Horkos: Oath in Greek Society*, ed. A. Sommerstein and J. Fletcher (Exeter: Phoenix Press, 2007); see also C. Faraone, "Molten Wax, Spilt Wine, and Mutilated Animals: Sympathetic Magic in Early Greek and Near Eastern Oath Ceremonies," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113 (1993): 60–80. On the spread of Near Eastern technological innovations to the Greek world, and concomitant spread of ideas, see W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. A. Raffan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, 26–29, and, with a slightly different but related emphasis, D. Wengrow, *The Origins of Monsters: Image and Cognition in the First Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

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suggests that curse tablets were persistently popular. An attempt to map the distribution of this material, including details of dates as well as place, would reveal the extent and chronology of this popularity more precisely.[177] If such a mapping also included developments in formulae and details of find-sites, then this might give insights into not only the specific practices of particular communities but also the similarities and differences between practices. Any patterns of practice could potentially reveal interactions between local and distant communities, and this might further understanding of the networks of transmission—of knowledge and influence—within which these practices spread.[178]

On the second point, these texts enable scholars to examine some of the social dynamics within communities, and the possible motives of those who, over time and place, wrote, ordered or manufactured these texts. Questions remain about the identity of individuals whose names are inscribed on the curse tablets themselves, and the relationships between those individuals and between them and the writers of the texts. In terms of identities, some tablets offer details of their targets' origins within Attica or beyond, others their work locations or professions, still others note which targets are their neighbours. Some refer to slaves and/or their owners; others list members of the same family; some extend the spell to unnamed relatives, even the children of their targets. A thorough analysis of the personnel of particular texts or groups of texts, and the connections between them, would greatly enrich our understanding of ancient society and the social dynamics of communities in which curses were used. In terms of the motivations and emotional dynamics that may have prompted the writing of curse tablets, and sustained its practice, different suggestions have been made.[179] As research on the relational nature of emotions develops, and in the context of the "cognitive turn" of scholarship, including ancient history and literature, this may also prove a fruitful area for further study.

177 This work is now made significantly easier by the development of the extensive online resources of, for example, the *Thesaurus Defixionum Magdeburgensis*. This project states its aim to be further research on the question of "what sort of balance exists between the trans-historic and trans-geographic elements and those traits that are specific of a given cultural context." See http://www-e.uni-magdeburg.de/defigo/wordpress/?page_id=2.

178 Spanish and British curse practice compared by Tomlin, "Cursing a Thief in Iberia and Britain," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 245–73.

179 H.S. Versnel, "'Punish Those Who Rejoice in Our Misery.' On Curse Tablets and Schadenfreude," in *The World of Ancient Magic*, 125–62 argues that *Schadenfreude* underlies the creation of curses, but Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*, 250–53, challenges this and argues for the importance of culturally specific emotions, suggesting in addition the central role of φθόνος or "envy."

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Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER 16

Jewish Amulets, Magic Bowls, and Manuals in Aramaic and Hebrew

Gideon Bohak

The Jews of late antiquity may broadly be divided into three distinct cultural spheres—those of the Greek-speaking western Diaspora, those of Palestine and its environs, where Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew were widely in use, and those of the eastern Diaspora, where Aramaic was the main language of communication, Hebrew was used in some specific contexts, and Greek was virtually unknown. The magical activities of the Greek-speaking Jews are mostly unknown to us, as the sources at our disposal consist mainly of a handful of Greek-language amulets, curse tablets, or recipes found in the 'pagan' Greek magical papyri which are likely to be Jewish in origins, and as many more such texts defy easy classification as Jewish, Christian, or even 'pagan' in origins.[1] The Aramaic- and Hebrew-speaking Jews, on the other hand, have left behind a much richer record of their magical activities, and the artifacts they produced—composed in Jewish Aramaic and in Hebrew and inscribed in the square script which was used exclusively by Jews—can hardly be identified as anything but Jewish. It is these sources which shall be surveyed in the present chapter. We shall begin with a survey of the Aramaic and Hebrew amulets and magical spells found in archeological sites in Byzantine Palestine and its environs, move to the Aramaic magic bowls of Sassanian Babylonia, and end with the manuals and recipes used by Jewish magicians in late antiquity, as preserved in the Cairo Genizah and other collections of medieval and later Jewish manuscripts.[2] This three-pronged survey will be followed by a broader

1 See Lynn R. LiDonnici, "'According to the Jews': Identified (and Identifying) 'Jewish' Elements in The *Greek Magical Papyri*," in *Heavenly Tablets: Interpretation, Identity and Tradition in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Lynn LiDonnici and Andrea Lieber, Supplements to the Journal for the study of Judaism 119 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 87–108; Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 194–214.

2 For fuller surveys of these materials, see Philip S. Alexander, "Incantations and Books of Magic," in *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. E. Schürer, vol. 3/1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 342–379; Michael D. Swartz, "Jewish Magic in Late Antiquity," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. IV: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. S.T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 699–720; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 143–226; Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah*, trans. Batya Stein (Detroit: Wayne

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synthesis, which will try to show what these sources can, and cannot, teach us about their producers and owners and about the social milieu and cultural niveau to which they belonged, and by a general comparison of the Jewish and the non-Jewish magical texts of late antiquity. Finally, we shall offer some thoughts on how this relatively young field of research could and should progress in the foreseeable future. Throughout the present chapter, we shall try to avoid the thorny issue of defining 'magic'—which is amply covered by other contributions to the present volume—but should stress that in what follows no mention will be made of magical practices which became part and parcel of the Jewish religion at the time, such as the placing of a *mezuzah* on one's doorpost, the wearing of *tephillin* (which are still known in English under their Greek name, "phylacteries", which is the Greek word for "amulets"!),[3] or the incorporation of apotropaic prayers and practices into the daily liturgy. Nor shall we be dealing with fields which are occasionally related to magic but mostly distinct from it—such as astrology, medicine, or mysticism. We are, in other words, interested in 'Jewish magic' in the narrower sense of the word,[4] and especially in its textual and material remains which were written in Aramaic and Hebrew. And as we shall focus on the Roman and Early Byzantine periods, we may briefly note that there are very few Hebrew and Aramaic magical texts from earlier periods, including two silver amulets from Jerusalem of the sixth century BCE and bits and pieces of exorcistic texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.[5] It is only from the third or fourth century CE that Hebrew

State University Press, 2017), 207–293. In what follows, we shall leave aside non-textual magical objects—whose Jewishness often is extremely difficult to prove or refute—and textual artifacts of which only a few specimens are extant, such as the magical skulls discussed by Dan Levene, "Calvariae Magicae: The Berlin, Philadelphia and Moussaieff Skulls," *Orientalia* 75 (2006): 359–379.

3 And cf. Yehudah Cohn, "Were Tefillin Phylacteries?," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59 (2008): 39–61.

4 Cf. above, Harari, Chapter 8.

5 For the two amulets found in Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem, see esp. G. Barkay, M.J. Lundberg, A.G. Vaughin and B. Zuckerman, "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation," *Bulletin-American Schools of Oriental Research* 334 (2004): 41–71. For the magical texts found at Qumran, see Joseph Naveh, "Fragments of an Aramaic Magic Book from Qumran," *Israel Exploration Journal* 48 (1998): 252–261, Reprint, Naveh, *Studies in West-Semitic Epigraphy: Selected Papers* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2009), 167–176; M.D. Swartz, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Later Jewish Magic and Mysticism," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8 (2001): 182–193; Florentino García Martínez, "Magic in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 13–33, Reprint, García Martínez, *Qumranica Minora*, 2 vols., Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 63–64 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 2: 109–130.

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and Aramaic texts start to show up in much greater numbers, and it is upon them that we shall focus here.

1 Palestinian Jewish Amulets and Related Texts

In late antique sites in Israel and its neighboring countries, and even in more distant locations in Italy and in Georgia, archeologists and robbers have unearthed many dozens of metal lamellae, and one set of pottery shards, bearing Aramaic and Hebrew magical texts.[6] To date, more than forty such objects were published, a few dozen more were reported, but were deemed unworthy of being published because of their poor state of preservation, and another handful of well preserved specimens shall be published in the near future.[7]

6 For the most important publications, see AMB, A1–A15; MSF, A16–A32; R. Kotansky, "Two Inscribed Jewish Aramaic Amulets from Syria," *Israel Exploration Journal* 41 (1991): 267–281; R. Kotansky, "An Inscribed Copper Amulet from 'Evron," *'Atiqot* 20 (1991): 81–87, republished in Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae. Part I: Published Texts of known Provenance*, Papyrologica Coloniensia 22/1, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), no. 56; R. Kotansky, J. Naveh and S. Shaked, "A Greek-Aramaic Silver Amulet from Egypt in the Ashmolean Museum," *Le Muséon* 105 (1992): 5–26; Konstantin Tsereteli, "An Aramaic Amulet from Mtskheta," *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 3 (1996): 218–40 (re-edited by Shaul Shaked, "Notes on Some Jewish Aramaic Inscriptions from Georgia," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 32 (2006): 503–10); C. Thomas McCollough and Beth Glazier-McDonald, "An Aramaic Amulet from Sepphoris," *'Atiqot* 28 (1996): 161–165; C. McCollough, "Social Magic and Social Realities in Late Roman and Early Byzantine Galilee," in *Galilee Through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures*, ed. Eric M. Meyers, Duke Judaic Studies 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 269–280; J. Naveh, "An Aramaic Amulet from Bar'am," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*: *Part III*, vol. 4, ed. A.J. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner, Handbook of Oriental Studies 1, 55 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), 179–185; J. Naveh, "Some New Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Amulets," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 26 (2002): 231–36; C. Müller-Kessler, T.C. Mitchell and M.I. Hockey, "An Inscribed Silver Amulet from Samaria," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 139 (2007): 5–19; Émile Puech, "Une amulette judéo-palestinienne bilingue en argent," *Meghillot* 5–6 (2008): 177–86; Hanan Eshel and Rivka Leiman, "Jewish Amulets Written on Metal Scrolls," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 1 (2010): 189–199; Ada Yardeni and Gideon Bohak, "A Pregnancy Amulet for Marian, Daughter of Esther," in *Eretz Israel*, vol. 32: *Joseph Naveh Volume*, ed. Joseph Aviram, Shmuel Ahituv, Israel Eph'al, Ada Yardeni and Anat Mendel-Geberovich (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2016), 100–107 (Heb.); Rivka Elitzur Leiman and Uzi Leibner, "An Amulet from Khirbet Wadi Ḥamam," *Israel Exploration Journal* 66 (2016): 220–31.

7 In addition to these Aramaic and Hebrew amulets, I note two Greek amulets with transliterated Hebrew sentences (whose Jewish origins therefore are hardly in doubt), which were found on the edges of the Roman Empire—for the one from Caernarvon (Wales), see Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets*, no. 2, and for the one from Halbturn (Austria), see Esther Eshel, Hanan Eshel and Armin Lange, "'Hear, O Israel' in Gold: An Ancient Amulet

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How many more such artifacts might be found in museums and private collections is not really known, but the number certainly is not a very large one (probably no more than a few dozens). Most of these texts are amulets, usually prepared for specific clients, but sometimes of a more 'generic' variety, and perhaps even prefabricated in advance and sold or given to whoever needed an amulet and could not afford a made-to-order artifact. The texts upon most amulets tend to be quite short (mainly because of the great difficulty of engraving longer texts on thin sheets of metal), and to consist of the client's name, the aim for which the amulet was produced, an adjuration of the demon(s) whose harmful influence the amulet seeks to avert, and many favorable references to God and His angels. One typical amulet, inscribed on lead and probably found in the cemetery of Oxyrhynchus, in Egypt, contains an Aramaic adjuration of the demon called Fever and Shivering to leave the body of Marian daughter of Esther; the adjuration is in the name of God, whose creation of the universe and great powers are then stressed.[8] The entire amulet has only eight lines of text, and while the original amulet may have been a bit longer, even this is far from certain.

For another typical Aramaic amulet, we may look at a copper lamella found in Horvat Kanaf, in the Golan Heights, on which we find twenty-three short lines of text, containing a spell to keep all demons away from Rabbi Eleazar, the son of Esther, who is further identified as "the servant of the God of Heaven."[9] This amulet also contains long strings of *voces magicae*, a threat to the demons that if they detain Eleazar they will immediately be cast into a fiery furnace, a blessing of God, who heals the entire earth, and a call upon the three angels who are in charge of fever and shivering—and who are named here as Bobrit, Tabrit, and Bashtarot—to heal Eleazar of his illness, supposedly brought on by the demons who afflict him.

Some amulets contain additional elements, such as biblical verses (either verses that describe God's power or verses which are deemed relevant for the amulet's specific aim), *charaktēres* and other magic signs, and such liturgical formulae as Amen Amen Selah or Hallelujah. For example, an amulet found in a tomb near Aleppo is inscribed on a silver lamella, contains Hebrew and Aramaic spells to drive several different demons out of Aqemu daughter of

from Halbturn in Austria," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 1 (2010): 43–64. For a wider perspective on this phenomenon, see Gideon Bohak, "Greek-Hebrew Linguistic Contacts in Late Antique and Medieval Magical Texts," in *The Jewish-Greek Tradition in Antiquity and the Byzantine Empire: A Festschrift for Nicholas de Lange*, ed. Jim Aitken and James Carleton-Paget (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 247–260, esp. 248–51.

8 AMB, A9.

9 AMB, A3.

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Em-rabban, and contains some *voces magicae* (including, for example, slightly garbled versions of Marmaraôth and Ablanathanalba, both of which are well known from the Greek Magical Papyri, and from Greek amulets and *defixiones*), a set of magical signs (some of which look like a failed attempt to produce paleo-Hebrew letters), and crude depictions of three suns and seven stars.[10] This amulet also incorporates an assortment of bits of biblical verses (including Jer 10:10 and Job 38:13, which emphasize God's numinous powers over the whole of creation, and which, as is common in these spells, are cited in the Hebrew original), the set liturgical formulae Amen Amen Selah and Hallelujah, and some of God's many names (such as [YHWH] Sabaoth). In its present state, the amulet displays thirty-four short lines of text, and although its end is lost, it is not likely to have been much longer.

Such are the more typical amulets. For a less typical example, one may turn to a silver amulet said to have come from El Amarna, in Egypt, and seeking to heal Ioannis (i.e., John) son of Benenata.[11] Here the text is much longer, and is bilingual, and even trilingual, beginning with a few lines of Greek, moving to a long Aramaic section which also cites an (extra-biblical) Hebrew text, and ending with a few more lines of Greek. The entire amulet is made up of some thirty-seven long lines of text, the printed edition of which runs to two full pages (and all this on a silver plate 12 cm wide and 6 cm high!). In addition to all the above-mentioned components, we find here some of the "word triangles" so common in the 'pagan' Greek magical texts of late antiquity (in this case, a series of Greek vowels written in a "dwindling" form),[12] and even more *voces magicae* (including some, like Arsenophry, Pakerbôth and Phre, which are of a demonstrably Egyptian origin, quite a rare occurrence in the Jewish amulets). To cap it all, we also find within the Aramaic section a short exorcistic psalm, which is said to be the one recited by David over King Saul in order to expel the evil spirit which was afflicting him (see 1 Sam 16:14–23), and which is cited here in Hebrew. The production and dissemination of such exorcistic hymns was a favorite pastime of many Jews from the Second Temple period onwards, and their appearance on late-antique Jewish magical texts raises many interesting questions about the composition and transmission of such pseudepigraphical compositions.[13] But perhaps the most interesting aspect of this amulet is

10 AMB, A4.

11 Kotansky, Naveh and Shaked, "A Greek-Aramaic Silver Amulet."

12 See below, Frankfurter, Chapter 23.

13 And cf. Gideon Bohak, "Exorcistic Psalms of David and Solomon (an Introduction and Translation)," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Bauckham, James Davila and Alexander Panayotov (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 287–97.

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that a very similar amulet is known, and is said to have been found in Rome in the nineteenth century.[14] It is badly preserved, but displays the same mixture of Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew texts as the El Amarna amulet, and, what is far more surprising, has a sequence of magic signs (*charaktēres*) that is virtually identical with that found in the other amulet. The handwritings on both amulets are different, and so we would seem to have here two Jewish amulets produced from the same multilingual recipe book, perhaps even in the same atelier, but by different producers. Whether this atelier was active in fifth-century Rome or in fifth-century Egypt is not really clear, given the uncertainty about the provenance of both amulets, and given that such amulets are extremely portable. But the existence of such multilingual, and even multiethnic and multireligious, ateliers in late antiquity is documented by other finds as well, as we shall see below.

In addition to the amulets, a handful of Aramaic and Hebrew magical texts from late antique Palestine are non-amuletic in nature. One bronze tablet, found in the ancient synagogue of Meroth (in the Upper Galilee), contains a series of praises of God and a detailed call for the subjugation of the town's people to Yose, son of Zenobia, so that they "will be subjugated, and broken, and fallen before Yose, son of Zenobia."[15] The practice of burying aggressive spells in the synagogue's walls or under its floors is attested in other sources as well, and the use of magic to gain social control is, of course, extremely wide spread in late antique society, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.[16] Equally well attested is the use of erotic magic, and here too we have interesting evidence of the Jewish recourse to such practices, in the form of five clay shards which were found in Horvat Rimmon (in the Northeastern Negev), and which display an Aramaic text incised into the clay when it was still wet and dark stains clearly caused by fire.[17] Joined together, these shards make up a part of

14 See Maria Giulia Amadasi and Gabriella Bevilacqua, "Filatterio greco-aramaico da Roma," *Mediterraneo Antico* 7 (2004), 711–25; Marco Moriggi, "Una *lamina* bilingue dal Medagliere Capitolino: considerazioni sul testo ebraico," *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 107 (2006), 163–70; Marco Moriggi, "A Bilingual Silver Lamella in the Medagliere Capitolino (Rome)," in *Loquentes Linguis: Linguistic and Oriental Studies in Honour of Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti*, ed. Pier Giorgio Borbone, Alessandro Mengozzi, and Mauro Tosco (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 515–22.

15 MSF, A16; see also J. Naveh, "'A Good Subduing, There is None Like It': An Amulet from Horvat Marish in the Galilee," *Tarbiz* 54 (1985): 367–82 (Heb.).

16 For magic in the synagogue, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 314–22.

17 AMB, A10. For erotic Jewish magic, see Yuval Harari, "'For a Woman to Follow You': Love Charms in Ancient Jewish Magic," *Kabbalah* 5 (2000): 247–64 (Heb.), and Ortal-Paz Saar, *Jewish Love Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 6 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2017).

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an erotic spell, intended to make R[achel? daughter of Mar?]in burn in love for a person whose name unfortunately is lost. As we shall see below, the great value of these small shards—the largest of which is less than 6 cm wide and 4 cm high—lies in the proof they furnish for the circulation and application in Byzantine Palestine of a magical recipe whose continuous transmission may be traced all the way to the twentieth century.

2 Sassanian Incantation Bowls in Jewish Aramaic

Whereas Byzantine Palestine and its environs provide us with a relatively wide array of different magical texts and artifacts, but only in small numbers, the Jews of Sassanian Babylonia have left us with one main type of magical texts, but in much greater abundance and with many variations among the different specimens. Found in different sites in modern Iraq and in western Iran, the so-called incantation bowls—in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, Mandaic, Syriac, Pahlavi and Arabic (to list them from the most common language to the rarest ones) are round clay bowls, inscribed on their inside with magical spells, mostly of an apotropaic nature.[18] Unfortunately, the current turmoil in Iraq

18 For the most important publications of Aramaic incantation bowls, see James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, Philadelphia U. Museum: Publications of the Babylonian Section 3 (Philadelphia: Philadelphia University Museum, 1913); Cyrus H. Gordon, "Aramaic Magical Bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad Museums," *Archiv Orientální* 6 (1934): 319–34; Cyrus H. Gordon, "Aramaic and Mandaic Magical Bowls," *Archiv Orientální* 9 (1937): 84–106; Cyrus H. Gordon, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Orientalia* 10 (1941), 116–41, 272–76, 278–89, 339–60; Isak Jeruzalmi, *Les coupes magiques araméennes de Mésopotamie* (Paris: The Sorbonne, 1963); C.D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 17 (Missoula, MT: Scholars' Press, 1975); M.J. Geller, "Four Aramaic Incantation Bowls," in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Gary Rendsburg, Ruth Adler, Milton Arfa and Nathan H. Winter (New York: Ktav, 1980), 47–60; M.J. Geller, "Eight Incantation Bowls," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 17 (1986): 101–17; AMB, B1–B13; MSF, B14–B27; J.B. Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2000); Dan Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity*, The Kegan Paul Library of Jewish Studies (London: Kegan Paul, 2003); Christa Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung Jena* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005); Ali H. Faraj, *Coppe magiche dell'antico Iraq, con testi in aramaico giudaico di età ellenistica* (Milan: Lampi di Stampa, 2010); Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford and Siam Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013); Dan Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia: "May These Curses Go Out and Flee"*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 2 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013); Tatyana Fain, James Nathan Ford and Alexey Lyavdansky, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls at the State

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does not bode well for the bowls, which are illegally excavated and smuggled out of the country at an alarming rate, eventually winding their way to private collections all over the world. And so, while many bowls were excavated by competent archeologists in well known sites and ended up in respectable museums where they are available for scholarly inspection, far more bowls are of unknown provenance, are not registered or listed anywhere, and in some cases are entirely inaccessible to academic study. To date, some four hundred incantation bowls written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic have been published, all of which are likely to have been produced by Jewish bowl-scribes, for Jewish and non-Jewish clients alike.[19] But while the total number of such bowls is known to be many times larger, no one really knows how many Jewish Aramaic bowls are currently extant.

Physically, most of the bowls in question are no different from other bowls in daily use in the Sassanian period, and it is quite clear that they were not specifically produced for magical use but were bought in great numbers by experts who knew the spells to be written upon them and who usually wrote

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Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg," in *Babel und Bibel 9: Proceedings of the 6th Biennial Meeting of the International Association for Comparative Semitics and Other Studies*, ed. L. Kogan, N. Koslova, S. Loesov, and S. Tishchenko (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 283–316. It must be stressed, however, that the above list is far from complete. For broad surveys of the evidence, see also E.M. Yamauchi, "Aramaic Magic Bowls," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85 (1965), 511–23; C.D. Isbell, "The Story of the Aramaic Magical Incantation Bowls," *Biblical Archeologist* 41 (1978): 5–16; Dan Levene, *Curse or Blessing, What's in the Magical Bowl?*, Parkes Institute Pamphlet No. 2, (Southhampton, UK: University of Southampton, 2002); Michael G. Morony, "Magic and Society in Late Sassanian Iraq," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. Scott B. Noegel, Joel Walker and Brannon M. Wheeler, Magic in History Series (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 83–107; Shaul Shaked, "Magical Bowls and Incantation Texts: How to Get Rid of Demons and Pests," *Qadmoniot* 129 (2005): 2–13 (Heb.); Gideon Bohak, "Babylonian Incantation Bowls—Past, Present and Future (on *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Bowls in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity*, by Dan Levene)," *Pe'amim* 105–106 (2005/6): 253–65 (Heb.); Michael G. Morony, "Religion and the Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Religion Compass* 1 (2007): 414–29.

19 For a list of 152 Aramaic bowls published up to 2000, see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Bar-Ilan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 62–66. For bowls in other Aramaic dialects, and probably not produced by Jews, see esp. Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Mandaic Incantation Texts*, American Oriental Series 49 (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1967); Matthew Morgenstern, "Mandaic Magic Bowls in the Moussaieff Collection: A Preliminary Survey," in *New Inscriptions and Seals Relating to the Biblical World*, ed. Meir and Edith Lubetski (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 157–70; Marco Moriggi, *A Corpus of Syriac Incantation Bowls: Syriac Magical Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 3 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2014).

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them on behalf of specific clients. Why they chose this writing surface, which is far from convenient, is not really known, but the fact that many bowls were found upside-down, or glued to each other so as to form an enclosed space between them, and the bowls' own references to acts of 'overturning' and 'suppressing' and to placing bowls in different parts of the house all suggest that the bowls were seen as 'demon traps,' intended to attract and then bind the demons which proliferated in the homes of Sassanian Babylonia.[20]

A standard bowl would be ca. 16 cm in diameter and ca. 5 to 6 cm in depth, and the spell upon it would be written on the bowl's inside, usually in a spiral manner, from the center of the bowl towards its rim or from the rim towards the center. The text itself, when printed in a modern edition, usually runs to between a few lines and a full page of text, consisting of the clients' name(s), apotropaic and exorcistic formulae, adjurations against all kinds of evil demons, appropriate biblical verses, *voces magicae*, and so on.[21] The texts vary greatly, but one of their striking features is the recurrence, sometimes on

20 Cf. David Frankfurter, "Scorpion/Demon: On the Origin of the Mesopotamian Apotropaic Bowl," *The Journal of Near-Eastern Studies* 74 (2015): 9–18.

21 For analyses of the bowls' contents, see also Shaul Shaked, "'Peace be Upon You, Exalted Angels': On Hekhalot, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 (1995): 197–219; Shaul Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells: Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity 1: The Divorce Formula and Its Ramifications," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*, ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn, Ancient Magic and Divination 1 (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 173–95; Christa Müller-Kessler, "Die aramäische Beschwörung und ihre Rezeption in den mandäisch-magischen Texten am Beispiel ausgewählter aramäischer Beschwörungsformulare," in *Charmes et sortilèges, magie et magiciens*, ed. Rika Gyselen, Res Orientales 14 (Louvain: Peeters, 2002), 193–208; Dan Levene, "'A Happy Thought of the Magicians': The Magical 'Get'," in *Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff*, ed. Robert Deutsch (Tel-Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2003), 175–84; Shaul Shaked, "Form and Purpose in Aramaic Spells: Some Jewish Themes (The Poetics of Magic Texts)," in *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, IJS Studies in Judaica 4, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 1–30; Shaul Shaked, "*Dramatis Personae* in the Jewish Magic Texts: Some Differences Between Incantation Bowls and Genizah Magic," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 13 (2006): 363–87; Shaul Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells: The Case of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari and Shaul Shaked, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 15 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 187–217; Christa Müller-Kessler, "The Use of Biblical Quotations in Jewish Aramaic Incantation Bowls," in *Studies on Magic and Divination in the Biblical World*, ed. Helen R. Jacobus, Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme and Philippe Guillaume, Biblical Intersections 11 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013), 227–45; see also *Aramaic Studies* 13 (2015), for an entire fascicle devoted to the Aramaic incantation bowls. Much has been written on the bowls' linguistic features, but these discussions tend to be less relevant for the study of their magic-related aspects, and will therefore not be surveyed here.

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a dozen different bowls, of long textual units that the bowl producers seem to have committed to memory (or, perhaps, to writing), to have shared with each other, and to have used time and again, often with some variations.[22] Finally, in addition to the texts, many bowls also contain an image—most commonly at the bowl's center—often depicting bound male or female demons, and in some rare cases perhaps also the sorcerers and witches whose sorceries some bowls sought to annul. These images offer the modern scholar an excellent point of departure for the study of the visual aspects of demons in the imagination of the Jews of Sassanian Babylonia, the most striking of which is their highly hybrid nature.[23]

As a typical example of the Babylonian incantation bowls, we may look at a bowl of unknown provenance which contains eight lines of text, spiraling from the bowl's center towards its rim.[24] It contains no image, begins with a standard formula "By your (i.e., God's) Name I make (this bowl)," and continues to specify that Goray son of Burzandukh, Gushay daughter of Ifra-Hurmiz, Goray son of Fradadukh and all their offspring and possessions are sealed and protected, and every type of evil demon—and here comes a list of some twenty different kinds of demons (!)—will leave them alone. This is to be achieved by adjuring the demons by the secret of the ring, and by the twelve hidden, sealed and guarded mysteries; after some *voces magicae*, the bowl rounds it all off with the ubiquitous formula Amen, Amen Selah.

A second bowl is perhaps of greater interest, especially because of its striking iconography.[25] At the center of the bowl, a hybrid figure is depicted frontally, spreading its human legs to both sides of its body and bending its clawed and bound arms downwards. It also seems to have wings in mid-body, and perhaps feathers as well, a belt around its waistline, and what looks like an exaggerated female genital organ between its legs, which are covered in stockings or trousers. Its face is quite human, with short hair, two eyes shadowed by large eyebrows, a straight nose, and a mouth that slants downwards on both sides and then seems to connect directly into the figure's hands.[26] But perhaps the most interesting feature of this bowl is that here—unlike most other bowls—the figure is identified by a caption, which explains that "This

22 Many examples of this phenomenon may be found, for example, in Shaked, Ford and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*.

23 For a detailed analysis of the bowls' iconography and its significance, see Naama Vilozny, *Lilith's Hair and Ashmedai's Horns: Figure and Image in Magic and Popular Art, between Babylonia and Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 2017) (Heb.).

24 MSF, B15.

25 MSF, B18.

26 For the bowl's iconography, see Vilozny, *Lilith's Hair and Ashmedai's Horns*, 326 (Heb.).

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is the figure of Mavkhalta, who appears in dreams and takes on (different) forms." This Mavkhalta is a frequent visitor on the incantation bowls, but here we see an interesting attempt to depict this dangerous shape-shifting dream-apparition and bind it at the same time. In addition to the caption identifying it, the figure is surrounded by a short binding formula and two angel names, and the entire set of image-cum-text is enclosed in a circle from which emanate fourteen triangles, each of which contains the divine names YHWH and YHW, which apparently are intended to "seal" the circle and prevent Mavkhalta from escaping.[27] Finally, and on what little space remained, the scribe wrote down a short spell, identifying the entire "seal" as the famous "Seal of Solomon," and using it to protect Panah-Hurmiz son of Rashndukh and Khowasti daughter of Gayot and Baftoy daughter of Khowasti and Rashndukh daughter of Khowasti and all who dwell in their houses and all their property; this is followed by a request for health for all of them, in the name of God and of some *voces magicae*, and the bowl ends with the ubiquitous mixture of Amens and Selahs.

Whereas these two bowls are straightforward enough, many bowls are far more complex and obscure, especially since they seem to be deeply influenced by local Mesopotamian elements of Babylonian, Iranian or unknown origins. Thus, a bowl currently in the British Museum contains a long spell intended to protect Gushnazdukht daughter of Ahat from various harms and sorceries. To achieve this aim, the client (or, more likely, the person who produced the bowl on her behalf) describes herself in the first person as sitting at the gate of her house and as resembling the Babylonian one and the Borsippean one (presumably referring to two local goddesses or female demons), and as being the wide earth, which no one can bend, the high heaven, which no one can reach, a bitter herb, which no one can swallow, and a bitter river, from which no one can drink.[28] This rather obscure set of claims is followed by a

27 The use of YHW(H)'s name to "seal" space is a well-known practice, appearing, for example, in *Sepher Yezirah*—see A. Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yesira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 89–91, and Peter Hayman, "Was God a Magician?: Sefer Yesira and Jewish Magic," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 40 (1989): 225–37.

28 For this bowl (BM 135563) and its Mesopotamian background, see Segal, *Catalogue*, 049A; Christa Müller-Kessler and T. Kwasman, "A Unique Talmudic Aramaic Incantation Bowl," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120 (2000): 159–165; Matthew Morgenstern, "Notes on a Recently Published Magic Bowl," *Aramaic Studies* 2 (2004): 207–222; Markham J. Geller, "Tablets and Magic Bowls," in *Officina Magica*, 53–72, at 57–62; Christa Müller-Kessler and Theodore Kwasman, "Once Again on the Unique Incantation Bowl BM135563," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 132 (2012), 189–198; Matthew Morgenstern, "Yet Again on the Unique Incantation Bowl BM 135563," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 133 (2013): 111–117.

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mythical story of how three evil demons—Pag'i ("Attacker"), Paqi ("Burster") and Mallalta ("(Evil) word")—tried to attack her, and she told them to eat what she eats, drink what she drinks, and anoint themselves with what she uses to anoint herself. When they were unable to do so, because they do not share her supernatural abilities, she sent them back to harm him who had sent them to harm her in the first place. This is, in other words, an apotropaic counter-spell, intended to fight sorcery (a common fear in Babylonian culture from time immemorial) and send it back upon its evil perpetrators.[29] And it features a distinctly local coloring, visible not only from the localities mentioned (Babylon and Borsippa, two of the most famous cities of Mesopotamia), but also from the entire technique of claiming cosmic powers for the client which make her immune to her evil attackers—a technique which is found already in the Babylonian *Maqlû* texts but which remains unattested among the Palestinian amulets or those Genizah magical texts which are likely to be of Palestinian origins.[30] Thus, although the bowl ends with a typically Jewish formula, "In the name of TYQWS YHWH Sebaoth, Amen Amen Selah," its debt to non-Jewish, Babylonian models hardly is in doubt. But that said, we must note the absence of the Babylonian deities—the most important feature of Babylonian magic—from almost all the Aramaic incantation bowls.

But while the Jewish scribes seem to have been quite discerning in terms of what they were willing to borrow from their non-Jewish neighbors, some surprises do remain. Perhaps the most intriguing Aramaic incantation bowl published thus far, again of an unknown provenance, is aggressive rather than apotropaic.[31] It carries no image, but contains a very long text consisting of an introduction and a set of suggestive similes intended to make sure that Isha son of Ifra-Hurmiz will be suppressed before Mihlad and Bahran sons of Mirdukh: just like the white cock (whose manipulation apparently accompanied the writing or dedication of the magic bowl), just like different natural forces and objects are suppressed by each other, just like the cords and beams of wine- and oil-presses, and just like the Fallen Angels and a whole host of powerful mythical beings who were suppressed in remotest antiquity. At this stage of

29 For these counter-spells, see also Dan Levene, "'This is a Qybl' for Overturning Sorceries': Form, Formula—Threads in a Web of Transmission," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, 219–44; Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*.

30 See above, Schwemer, Chapter 4.

31 See Dan Levene, "'… and by the name of Jesus …': An Unpublished Magic Bowl in Jewish Aramaic," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999): 283–308; Shaul Shaked, "Jesus in the Magic Bowls: Apropos Dan Levene's '… and by the name of Jesus …'," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999), 309–19; Levene, *A Corpus*, Bowl M163, 120–38. References to Jesus are found in several other Aramaic incantation bowls, all of which remain unpublished.

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the spell, we get a glimpse of the scribe's complex mythological arsenal, which includes several allusions and references whose nature is quite obscure, apparently because they draw on non-Jewish mythological lore whose contents are no longer known to us. And to cap it all, the bowl ends with an adjuration in the Name of God and in the Name of Jesus, who suppressed the height and the depth by his Cross, and in the name of the Exulted Father, and in the name of the Holy Spirits for ever and ever. Thus, while this bowl too was written by a Jewish scribe, he clearly did not hesitate to incorporate some 'pagan' or Gnostic materials, and even a Christian formula, in his incantation, apparently assuming that this would only increase its efficacy.

3 Late Antique Jewish Magical Manuals

In addition to the amulets, love spells, subjugation spells, and magic bowls, all of which are "finished products" prepared for (fee-paying?) individuals for specific purposes, late antique Jews had at their disposal another type of magical text, namely, manuals and books of instructions providing the knowledge and the practical instructions needed for carrying out magical rituals for different aims. Unfortunately, unlike the "finished products," some of which must have been produced on papyrus and parchment but many of which were produced on more durable materials, and therefore are at least partly extant, the magical manuals were written on papyrus and parchment, and thus perished long ago, but for a handful of tiny fragments of Aramaic magical papyri preserved by the dry sands of Egypt.[32] Among these, perhaps the most curious find is a set of Aramaic and bilingual texts that was bundled together with Greek and Coptic magical texts, all of which came from a single multicultural atelier, somewhere in fifth- or sixth-century Egypt.[33] Unfortunately, in this case too, the Aramaic texts are extremely fragmentary. And yet, while late antique copies of such texts are no longer available—at least until new finds prove otherwise—some things may be known about them from the "finished products" produced according to their instructions, and much more may be deduced from the magical texts used by Jews in the Middle Ages, some of which can be shown to be based on late antique models. Among these medieval copies, the greatest priority must be assigned to those found in the Cairo Genizah (the used paper storage room of a

32 For the Aramaic magical papyri, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 165–69.

33 For the Aramaic fragments, see Paolo Marrassini, "I frammenti aramaici," *Studi classici e orientali* 29 (1979): 125–30; see also the other papers in the same fascicle for the Coptic and Greek fragments, which have since been republished several times.

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medieval synagogue, which, among its many other treasures, contains magical texts dating from the ninth century onwards) but much may also be learned from medieval and later Jewish manuscripts from outside the Genizah as well (which tend to date from much later than the earliest Genizah fragments).[34]

As a rule, the magical books used by the Jews of late antiquity may be divided into three main types—loose formularies, or collections of recipes; "literary" books of magic, with a coherent overall structure into which the magical knowledge was embedded; and compilations based on some external organizing principle. Let us look at each of these in some detail.

3.1 *Formularies / Recipe Books*

Perhaps the best example of the great continuity of the Jewish magical tradition from late antiquity onwards is the appearance, in more than ten manuscripts dating from the eleventh to the twentieth centuries and found both in the Cairo Genizah and outside it, of a recipe which bears striking resemblance to the one from which the Horvat Rimmon shards were produced in the fifth or sixth century.[35] Not only is the spell prescribed by these recipes (especially the earlier ones) extremely close to what we find on the Horvat Rimmon shards, and faithfully reproduces both a series of six rare angelic names and a set of *charaktēres*, the recipes' instructions—write this spell on unbaked clay and throw it in the fire—is exactly the procedure followed by the producer

34 For the most important publications of magical texts from the Cairo Genizah, see AMB, G1–G8; MSF, G9–G29; Lawrence H. Schiffman & Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1*, Semitic Texts and Studies 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); Peter Schäfer & Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 42, 64, 72 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994, 1997, 1999); Emma Abate, *Sigillare il mondo: Amuleti e ricette dalla Genizah: Manoscritti magici ebraici della biblioteca della Alliance Israelite Universelle di Parigi* (Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, 2015). For broad surveys, see Michael D. Swartz, "Scribal Magic and Its Rhetoric: Formal Patterns in Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah," *HTR* 83 (1990): 163–80; Steven Wasserstrom, "The Unwritten Chapter: Notes Towards a Social and Religious History of Geniza Magic," in *Officina Magica*, 269–93; Gideon Bohak, "Towards a Catalogue of the Magical, Astrological, Divinatory and Alchemical Fragments from the Cambridge Genizah Collections," in *"From a Sacred Source": Genizah Studies in Honour of Professor Stefan C. Reif*, ed. Ben Outhwaite and Siam Bhayro, Études sur le judaïsme médiéval 42; Cambridge Genizah Studies Series 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 53–79. For the use of biblical verses in the Genizah magical texts, see Dorothea M. Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung: Form und Funktion der biblischen Anspielungen in den magischen Texten der Kairoer Geniza*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 134 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

35 I hope to edit all the versions of this recipe in a forthcoming paper; for the time being, see MSF, G22, with the editors' notes.

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of the Horvat Rimmon shards. Thus, it seems quite certain that whoever produced these shards was not working from memory, but from a written source, which presumably contained more than a single recipe. The use of such written formularies is demonstrated once again by several interesting errors in the El Amarna amulet, where the scribe clearly miscopied the ritual instructions found in his (apparently bilingual or trilingual!) manual, instead of copying only the spell itself.[36] Finally, the presence in the Cairo Genizah of magical formularies dating from the ninth to the thirteenth century which contain clear signs of the late antique origins of many of their spells and recipes also proves the wide circulation of such magical recipe books in late antique Palestine and probably in Egypt as well.[37]

Whether similar formularies also were in wide circulation among the Jews of late antique Babylonia is a more difficult question, especially since most of the Babylonian bowls seem not to have been produced from written Vorlagen.[38] On the other hand, the presence in the Cairo Genizah, and in non-Genizah manuscripts, of a handful of incantations which bear striking resemblance to those found in the Babylonian incantation bowls does prove that at least at some stage, and at least in some cases, spells which were commonly inscribed on the bowls were written down and transmitted accurately to the practitioners of a later period.[39] But both in Palestine and in Babylonia, the processes of writing down, editing and transmitting magical knowledge in late antiquity are mostly beyond our reach, since both regions are generally too humid for the preservation of papyrus or parchment, on which such texts would have been written. We therefore have no access to contemporary Jewish magical texts comparable to the Greek Magical Papyri (all of which stem from Egypt),

36 See Kotansky, Naveh and Shaked, "A Greek-Aramaic Silver Amulet," 9, 18, 21–22.

37 For a fuller demonstration of this point, see Gideon Bohak, "The Jewish Magical Tradition from Late Antique Palestine to the Cairo Genizah," in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, Jonathan J. Price and David J. Wasserstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 324–39; and cf. Reimund Leicht, "Some Observations on the Diffusion of Jewish Magical Texts from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah and Ashkenaz," in *Officina Magica*, 213–31.

38 This question has yet to receive a conclusive answer; see Shaked, "Transmission and Transformation of Spells."

39 One clear example of such continuity is the bowl-like spells embedded in the *Havdala de-Rabbi Akiba* (for which see below, n. 48). Another example was published by Dan Levene and Gideon Bohak, "Divorcing Lilith: From the Babylonian Incantation Bowls to the Cairo Genizah," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 63 (2012): 197–217. Other examples may be found in Gideon Bohak and Matthew Morgenstern, "A Babylonian Jewish Aramaic Magical Booklet from the Damascus Genizah," *Ginzei Qedem* 10 (2014): 9*–44*. A handful of other examples remain unpublished.

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and must rely almost exclusively on copies of copies of these texts, produced from the ninth century onwards and reflecting the medieval transmission of this ancient lore.

3.2 *"Literary" Books of Magic*

Whereas the Jewish magical formularies of late antiquity seem to have consisted of long series of recipes one after the other, Jewish magical know-how also was transmitted in books that had a much more "literary" structure, and that in some respects did not look that different from the other books of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.[40] The most famous of these compositions is *Sepher ha-Razim*, "the Book of the Mysteries," which is written in Hebrew and is characterized by its linguistic and structural sophistication. It begins with a long introduction, which elaborates on its supposed angelic composition and its former use by some of the Hebrew Bible's greatest protagonists. It then moves up through the seven heavens, providing for each heaven long lists of angels who dwell in each subsection thereof, what activities they are in charge of, and which magical activities must be performed in order to bind them to one's will and make them perform the services demanded by the recipes'

40 In what follows, I leave out the *Testament of Solomon*, a Greek, Christian magical text which may or may not have had Jewish precursors. For recent scholarship on the *Testament of Solomon*, see Pablo A. Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition*, Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements 73 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002); Sarah Iles Johnston, "The Testament of Solomon from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 35–49; Philip S. Alexander, "Contextualizing the Demonology of the Testament of Solomon," in *Die Dämonen—Demons: Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt. The Demonology of Israelite-Jewish and Early Christian Literature in Context of their Environment*, ed. Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger and K.F. Diethard Römheld (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 613–35; Todd E. Klutz, "The Archer and the Cross: Chorographic Astrology and Literary Design in the *Testament of Solomon*," in Todd Klutz (ed.), *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplements 245 (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 219–44; Todd Klutz, *Rewriting the Testament of Solomon: Tradition, Conflict, and Identity in a Late Antique Pseudepigraphon*, Library of Second Temple Studies 53 (London: T&T Clark, 2005); Peter Busch, *Das Testament Salomos: Die älteste christliche Dämonologie, kommentiert und in deutscher Erstübersetzung*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 153 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006); Sarah Schwartz, "Reconsidering the Testament of Solomon," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 16 (2007): 203–37; Ra'anan Boustan and Michael Beshay, "Sealing the Demons, Once and For All: The Ring of Solomon, the Cross of Christ, and the Power of Biblical Kingship," *ARG* 16 (2015): 99–130.

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users.[41] Stripped of its introductory materials, of the tedious lists of angelic names, and of the short descriptions of the sixth and seventh heavens (which focus solely on God's glory and His rule of the universe), the book would yield yet another series of magical recipes, some of which seem to be quite close to those of the Greek Magical Papyri.[42] In this case, however, the recipes underwent a complex editorial procedure (including, perhaps, their translation from Aramaic into Hebrew), clearly intended to embed them in a larger literary structure and perhaps also meant to make magical practices more palatable by adding pious descriptions of the book's respectable pedigree, of God's glory, and of the angelic hosts of the seven heavens. When exactly these editorial processes took place is far from clear, but Margalioth's assumption that the book dates to the third or fourth century now seems too early; on the other hand, the book is likely to predate the Muslim conquests, since it displays no Arabic or Muslim influences. Thus, a date in the fifth or sixth century would seem most likely, and the book seems to reflect an urban, Palestinian milieu, with Roman governors, leaden water-pipes, and chariot races. However, the only way to contextualize it with some certainty, and to demonstrate its actual use, would be to find in stratigraphically-datable archeological contexts some amulets and curses produced according to its instructions, and this has not yet happened. But despite the uncertainty about the book's provenance, there is no doubt that the decision to embed potent magical recipes in a palatable literary framework went well with the book's many readers, and *Sepher ha-Razim* remained in circulation for many centuries to come, and was available throughout the Middle Ages not only in its original Hebrew version, but also in Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew letters), Arabic, and Latin.[43] And

41 For the text of *Sepher ha-Razim*, see M. Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim: A Newly Recovered Book of Magic from the Talmudic Period* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Acharonot, 1966) (Heb.); Bill Rebiger and Peter Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim I und II—Das Buch der Geheimnisse I und II*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 125, 132, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). For an English translation, see Michael A. Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries* (Chico, CA: Scholars' Press, 1983); for analytical studies, see Jens-Heinrich Niggemeyer, *Beschwörungsformeln aus dem "Buch der Geheimnisse"* (*Sefär ha-Razim*)*: Zur Topologie der magischen Rede*, Judäistische Texte und Studien 3 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1975); Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity*, Magic in History (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002), 85–108; Philip S. Alexander, "*Sefer ha-Razim* and the Problem of Black Magic in Early Judaism," in *Magic in the Biblical World*, 170–190.

42 For the many similarities between the PGM and *Sepher ha-Razim*, see Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim*, 1–16 (Heb.).

43 For the Latin and the Judeo-Arabic versions, see Rebiger and Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim I und II*. For the Arabic version, see Alexander Fodor, "An Arabic Version of *Sefer Ha-Razim*," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 13 (2006): 412–27.

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in the Cairo Genizah, it is by far the most copied of all the "literary" books of Jewish magic, and there are even some signs of its actual use by the Jewish spell-writers of medieval Cairo.[44]

While *Sepher ha-Razim* is the best-known example of a late antique Jewish book of magic, it certainly was not the only one of its kind. Another interesting specimen is provided by the *Harba de-Moshe*, "the Sword of Moses," a book whose origins clearly lie in late antiquity, but whose complex transmission history is not entirely clear, especially since our best preserved textual witnesses are very late and badly garbled.[45] In its currently known version, it too contains a detailed introduction, but here the introduction is followed by a long list of mostly meaningless *voces magicae*, which are referred to as the "sword," and this in turn is followed by a long series of short recipes, which divides the "sword" into short sections and explains how each of these may be used for specific magical rituals. The recipes themselves tend to be simpler than those of *Sepher ha-Razim*, and probably point to a more rural milieu, but their aims contain the usual mixture of medicinal, aggressive, and divinatory procedures, with the addition of some unusual requests such as preventing rain from falling on one's roof or killing a bull by whispering the magic "sword" in its ears. And while the exact provenance of this Jewish magical text is far from clear, as it seems to have gone through several editorial versions and displays both Palestinian and Babylonian characteristics, it certainly remained in circulation for a very long time—in fact, the only complete manuscripts of this work which we now have date from the sixteenth century or later—and it too was translated into Arabic at some point.[46]

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44 For evidence of the book's actual use in the world of the Cairo Genizah, see Alessia Bellusci, "A Genizah Finished Product for *She'elat Halom* Based on *Sefer Ha-Razim*," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 67 (2016): 305–26; Gideon Bohak and Alessia Bellusci, "The Greek Prayer to Helios in *Sefer Ha-Razim*, in Light of New Textual Evidence," in *Cultural Plurality in Ancient Magical Texts and Practices*, ed. Ljuba Merlina Bortolani, William Furley, Svenja Nagel, and Joachim Friedrich Quack (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

45 For the *Sword of Moses*, see Moses Gaster, *The Sword of Moses* (London: Nutt, 1896) (also published in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1896), Reprint, M. Gaster, *Studies and Texts*, vol. 1 (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971), 288–337 and the same, vol. 3, 69–103; Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker, "From Sense to Nonsense, From Incantation Prayer to Magical Spell," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 24–46; Yuval Harari, *Harba de-Moshe* (*The Sword of Moses*)*: A New Edition and a Study* (Jerusalem: Academon, 1997) (Heb.); Yuval Harari, "Fragments of the *Sword of Moses* from the Cairo Genizah," *Ginzei Qedem* 10 (2014): 29–92 (Heb.); Yuval Harari, "The Sword of Moses (*Harba de-Moshe*): A New Translation and Introduction," *Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 7 (2012): 58–98.

46 For the Arabic version of the *Sword*, see Alexander Fodor, "An Arabic Version of "The Sword of Moses"," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, 341–85.

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In addition to these two large books of Jewish magic, several smaller pieces may be mentioned here, including the Aramaic "spell-busting" text known as the *Pishra de-Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa*, "the Sorcery-Loosening of Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa," an interesting text whose language and contents clearly argue for a late antique, Mesopotamian origin.[47] Another such text, the Hebrew and Aramaic *Havdala de-Rabbi Akiba*, "the Separation (between Sabbath and Weekday) Ritual of Rabbi Akiba," contains a series of spells, at least some of which are of a demonstrably Jewish-Babylonian origin, as may be seen from the close parallels between them and spells found on the Babylonian incantation bowls.[48] And to these two we may perhaps add several other Jewish magical texts which are first attested in the Cairo Genizah, but whose origins might lie in late antiquity—but to do so each of these texts must be studied separately, to see how old it is likely to be and where was its most likely place of composition, and this task would take us too far from our modest aims here.[49] For the time being, suffice it to say that the magical libraries of the Jews of late antique Palestine and Babylonia still await a patient reconstruction.

3.3 *"Structured" Books of Magic*

In addition to the personal, formless recipe books and to the more "literary" books of magic with their complex overarching structure, a third type of late antique Jewish magical texts may be mentioned here, namely, those which were arranged according to some external, predetermined, structure. The best known of these is *Shimmush Tehillim*, the "Use(s) of the Psalms," which lists for every biblical Psalm the magical uses to which it might be put and how exactly it should be used. The exact provenance of this composition—which enjoyed a wide circulation, in several different versions, in the Cairo Genizah and other medieval Jewish manuscripts, and which is paralleled by similar compositions in the Christian world—is not yet entirely clear, but a late antique origin is

47 Unfortunately, the only available edition of this text is the faulty edition by Franco Michelini Tocci, "Note e documenti di letterature religiosa e parareligiosa giudaica," *Annali dell'istituto universitario orientale di Napoli* 46 (1986): 101–8, who did not even realize that he was missing the end of the text. In the future, I hope to prepare a better edition, based on Genizah and non-Genizah copies of this intriguing text.

48 For this text, see Gershom Scholem, "Havdala de-Rabbi Aqiva—A Source for the Tradition of Jewish Magic During the Geonic Period," *Tarbiz* 50 (1980/81): 243–281 (Heb.), Reprint, Esther Liebes, ed., *Demons, Ghosts and Souls: Studies in Demonology by Gershom Scholem* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 2004), 145–82 (Heb.).

49 For two pertinent examples, see *Sepher ha-Yashar* and *Sepher Ha-Malbush*, as edited and analyzed by Irina Wandrey, *"Das Buch des Gewandes" und "Das Buch des Aufrechten": Dokumente eines magischen spätantiken Rituals, ediert, kommentiert und übersetzt*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 96 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

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vouchsafed by the presence of several fragments of this work in Palestinian Jewish Aramaic.[50] And here the organizing principle is external to the magical practice itself, since some versions of this work try to provide a "use" for each of the Psalms, others focus only on some of the Psalms, but all the versions follow the order of the biblical Psalms themselves. This kind of organizing principle is visible in other Jewish magical texts, such as the *Shimmush Yod-Het Berakhot*, "the Use(s) of the Eighteen Benedictions," where it is the standard rabbinic daily prayer which serves as the basis for arranging the magical procedures.[51] But as neither the date nor the provenance of this text is clear, and it might be of medieval Jewish origins, we might leave it aside in the present survey, and use such texts only as a reminder that the processes of compilation, composition and transmission of Jewish magical texts did not stop at the end of late antiquity, and continued unabated well into the Middle Ages.

4 The Broader Picture

Having surveyed the most important magical texts and artifacts produced by Jews in late antiquity, we may now turn to some of the broader questions arising from these disparate sources. The first general observation to be made about all these materials has to do with their chronological and geographical distribution, for while many of these texts cannot be dated with great precision, and many have been excavated illegally so that even their findspots are no longer known, the accumulation of all the evidence does allow two overarching generalizations. On the one hand, it seems clear that the magical texts of the Jews of Byzantine Palestine, Egypt, and Syria differed greatly from those of their brethren in Sassanian Babylonia, and that each of these two branches was influenced by the local magical practices with which it came into contact. On the other hand, it seems that both in the "west" and in the "east", the quantity and quality of the available evidence rises exponentially in the fifth or sixth

50 For this text, see Bill Rebiger, *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim—Buch vom magischen Gebrauch der Psalmen. Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 137 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). For some of the Christian uses of this type of literature, see C. Kayser, "Gebrauch von Psalmen zur Zauberei," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 42 (1888): 456–62; A. Khater, "L'emploi des Psaumes en thérapie avec formules en caractères cryptographiques," *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte* 19 (1967–68): 123–176; Nessim Henry Henein and T. Bianquis, *La magie par les psaumes*, Bibliothèque d'études coptes 12 (Cairo: IFAO, 1975).

51 For this text, see MTKG II, 26, 29–30, with the editors' notes, and cf. M. Benayahu, "The Book "Shoshan Yesod ha-Olam" by Rabbi Yoseph Tirshom," in I. Weinstock (ed.), *Temirin*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Kook, 1972), 187–269, at p. 236 (Heb.).

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century, a fact which may be explained as having to do with a greater recourse to magic at the time, but is more likely to reflect a shift from mostly oral magic to a more scribal variety, which therefore left behind many more written texts and artifacts.

Turning from the artifacts themselves to the social contexts in which they were produced and consumed, we find ourselves in a much more difficult position. On the clients' side, we at least have the names of many individuals on whose behalf, or against whom, the magical objects were manufactured. Thus, returning to the examples cited above, we may note that the amulet from Oxyrhynchus was produced for Marian daughter of Esther (a very Jewish name), the amulet from Aleppo was for the use of Aqemu daughter of Em-rabban (who is more likely to have been a 'pagan'), the amulet from Horvat Kanaf was made for Rabbi Eleazar, the son of Esther (certainly a Jewish name, and perhaps that of a member of the rabbinic class),[52] and the amulet said to have come from El Amarna was intended for Ioannis (John) son of Benenata (a name which is most likely to have been that of a Christian). Needless to add, none of these persons, or any of the other persons known to us from their amulets, are known from any other sources, which hardly is surprising given how few ancient Jews are known to us in any detail. And as for the bowls, all the individuals named in the bowls discussed above seem to bear Persian names (with the exception of Mardukh, a Babylonian name), but some bowls also were made for, or against, clients with obviously Jewish names, and once again, all these individuals are known to us solely from the incantation bowls in which they are mentioned. Even when we find bowls that mention well-known names, such as Rav Dimi, or Rav Ashi, we can never be sure that these are the rabbis of the same name(s) mentioned in the Talmud, since there they are identified by their fathers' names, whereas in the bowls it is their mothers' names that are mentioned.[53] We may, however, use this evidence for

52 For the possible meanings of the title "rabbi" when used in Jewish inscriptions, see Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Epigraphical Rabbis," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 72 (1981): 1–17; Hayim Lapin, "Epigraphical Rabbis: A Reconsideration," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101 (2011): 311–46; Stuart S. Miller, "'This Is the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Eliezer ha-Qappar' (Dabbura Inscription): Were Epigraphical Rabbis Real Sages, or Nothing More Than Donors and Honored Deceased?," in *Talmuda de-Eretz Israel: Archaeology and the Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine*, ed. Steven Fine and Aaron Koller, Studia Judaica 73 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 239–73.

53 And see James Nathan Ford and Alon Ten-Ami, "An Incantation Bowl for Rav Mesharshia son of Qaqay," *Tarbiz* 80 (2011), 219–30 (Heb.); Shaul Shaked, "Rabbis in Incantation Bowls," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Markham J. Geller, IJS Studies in Judaica 16 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2015), 97–120 (and note 103–104, where a rabbi is identified by his patronymic).

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some broad conclusions about the preponderance of female and male clients, and perhaps also about the different religious and ethnic communities whose members apparently turned to Jewish producers of Aramaic and Hebrew amulets, curses and incantation bowls. And this inter-communal aspect of ancient Jewish magic also is documented by external evidence, such as the railings of John Chrysostom against Christians who turn to Jewish amulet-makers for help in times of crisis; presumably, it is the likes of John son of Benenata that Chrysostom had in mind.[54]

So much for the clients, about whom at least some things may be known. But when it comes to the question of who produced the objects themselves, and who composed, copied, or used the books of magic whose existence was noted above, we find ourselves in a state of ignorance. For whereas the bowls and amulets often mention their clients' names, they never mention their producers' identity. In some cases, a person may have produced such an object on his or her own behalf (so that the name of the client also is that of the producer), but in most cases it is likely that he or she hired the services of a professional, a professional whose name is never mentioned in the "finished product" itself. And yet, while the Jewish magicians of late antiquity remain disturbingly anonymous, their social, religious, and cultural affiliations are not entirely unknown to us, since we have some of the Aramaic and Hebrew texts they composed or used for their magical praxis.

The analysis of this kind of evidence is bound to be somewhat subjective, but some patterns that emerge from the evidence at our disposal are quite suggestive. First and foremost, there is no doubt that the producers of the Aramaic and Hebrew magical texts of late antiquity were firmly monotheistic in their outlook—not in the sense of denying the existence of heavenly powers other than God (since their demonologies and angelologies were amazingly complex), but in the sense of seeing the Jewish God as superior to all the celestial powers He had created, and especially in the sense of censoring out of their texts all the 'pagan' gods to whom their non-Jewish colleagues were constantly

54 For Chrysostom's complaints, see Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 4 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 83–88; and Silke Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-Century Syria* (London: Routledge, 2007); for a similar report by Leontius of Byzantium, see Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001), 290–91; for further evidence, see Giancarlo Lacerenza, "Jewish Magicians and Christian Clients in Late Antiquity: the Testimony of Amulets and Inscriptions," in *What Athens Has to Do with Jerusalem: Essays on Classical, Jewish and Christian Art and Archaeology in Honor of Gideon Foerster*, ed. Leonard V. Rutgers, Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 393–419.

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appealing for help.[55] Thus, the Hebrew and Aramaic magical texts and artifacts are not the product of some 'Jewish Gnostics' or a group of Jewish heretics, but are far more 'mainstream' than we might otherwise imagine. Moreover, there is little doubt that many of these magicians were experienced scribes, who could even incise impressive quantities of text into an extremely small sheet of thin metal or write with ink on a concave clay bowl. Their learning covered more than a handful of useful spells, and often included an intimate familiarity with the Hebrew Bible (quotations from which, and allusions to which, abound both in the "Eastern" and in the "Western" Jewish magical texts of late antiquity), a rich vocabulary, and an impressive mastery of magical technologies and esoteric lore. Some of these producers may even have been members of the rabbinic class—and this supposition is corroborated by an interesting Talmudic story about two rabbinic disciples who wrote amulets for a (non-Jewish?) client, and by the presence of Mishnaic passages on several Babylonian incantation bowls—but it must be stressed that most of the ancient Jewish magical texts currently known to us are utterly devoid of any specifically rabbinic contents.[56] Finally, when we look at the amulets, we note the occasional use of contemporary medical terminology, a possible indication that some of the medical amulets were produced by late antique Jewish physicians, in line with what went on in the non-Jewish world at the same time, and with the claim found in rabbinic literature that some amulets (but not necessarily written amulets) were produced by professional physicians.[57]

One last question to be raised here is the status of all these activities within Jewish society at the time. At first sight, we might think that such activities were condemned, and perhaps even persecuted, by the secular (i.e., non-Jewish) and religious (i.e., rabbinic) authorities, and therefore belong to the very margins of late antique Jewish society. And yet, the magical texts and artifacts argue strongly against this facile hypothesis, as does the evidence found in contemporary rabbinic literature. Reading all the magical texts surveyed above, and looking at the findspots of those which were excavated by archeologists, one quickly comes to realize that there was nothing secretive about them, and that they often were placed in public or semi-public view, be it on one's

55 There are, of course, some exceptions, but they are very rare, and see Dan Levene and Gideon Bohak, "A Babylonian Jewish Aramaic Incantation Bowl with a List of Deities and Toponyms," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19 (2012): 56–72.

56 For the Talmudic story, see bPes 111b; for Mishnaic citations in some bowls, see Shaul Shaked, "Form and Purpose in Aramaic Spells," 3.

57 See pShab 6.2 (8b): "A physician may be trusted if he says, This amulet is approved—I healed with it once and twice and three times." And note the parable in Lev R. 26.5 (596–597 Margalioth) of a physician who gave an approved amulet to two Jewish epileptics.

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body, in one's house, in one's grave, or in the synagogue (and in one synagogue, nineteen amulets were found, clearly placed there by consent of the entire community).[58] And while aggressive, and socially disruptive, magic probably were more clandestine, it is interesting to note that even the erotic shards from Horvat Rimmon were found near the kiln in which they were fired as part of the magic rituals, and were not removed from there when the process was over. Apparently, neither client nor producer had great worries lest such negligence might cost them their lives, as it certainly could have in other times and places.

That magic was both ubiquitous and widely accepted in the Jewish society of late antiquity may also be deduced from rabbinic literature, which abounds in discussions and descriptions of such magical rituals, in stories about rabbis who engaged in magical practices, and in some theoretical discussions as to how and why magic really worked.[59] Surveying this rich material would take us too far afield, but suffice it to say that rabbinic literature both reflects and participates in the great interest in magic displayed by the Aramaic-speaking Jews of late antiquity.[60]

5 The Jewish and Non-Jewish Magical Texts of Late Antiquity

Having surveyed some of the main types of Jewish magical texts in late antiquity, we may now note some of the similarities and differences between this corpus of magical texts and the other great corpora of late antique magical texts, in Greek, Coptic, and to a lesser extent in Latin and demotic Egyptian as well. Like them, the Jewish magical texts display a wide range of aims and interests, from the apotropaic and medicinal to the aggressive and erotic, and a wide range of techniques and "final products," from the manufacturing of inscribed amulets and curses to elaborate rituals involving the manipulation of animal, vegetal and mineral substances, the adjuration of angels and demons, the ritual employment of biblical precedents (what scholars often call *historiolae*), and the insistence that some rituals must be carried out only in specific times and places. Like the non-Jewish magical texts, the Jewish ones too show a remarkable cultural openness, and the willingness

58 For magic in ancient synagogues, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 314–22.

59 See above, Harari, Chapter 8.

60 For fuller surveys of this issue, see the classic treatment by Ludwig Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Verlag von Louis Lamm, 1914), and the more recent surveys in Yuval Harari, "The Sages and the Occult," in *The Literature of the Sages*, Part II, ed. Shmuel Safrai, Zeev Safrai, Joshua Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 521–64; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 351–425.

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to incorporate many foreign elements into the magical praxis. And like the 'pagan' and Christian magical texts of late antiquity, the preservation of the Jewish ones was far from uniform, with those texts which happened to have been written on durable writing surfaces (or happened to have been written in Egypt, whose dry sands preserve even organic materials like papyrus) having a certain chance of survival, while all the others are likely to be irretrievably lost. And finally, like the non-Jewish magical texts of late antiquity, the Jewish ones too have been unduly spurned by scholars for far too long, and here we may even note that the serious study of the Jewish magical tradition came only decades after some Classicists and some Coptologists began to take *their* magical texts seriously. Thus, the study of the Jewish magical texts is still in its infancy, and—as any reader of the present survey would surely have noted by now—we have neither a comprehensive corpus of Jewish magical texts along the lines of the *PGM*, nor a comprehensive survey-*cum*-bibliography along the lines of Preisendanz's or Brashear's important surveys.[61] In fact, we do not even have a unified list of all the published and known but still unpublished Jewish magical texts of late antiquity, and when it comes to the Babylonian incantation bowls we do not even know how many of them there are, and where exactly we must look for them. What we do know, however, is that the number of unpublished bowls far exceeds the number of the published ones, and this again in marked contrast with the Greek magical texts of late antiquity, which have been published long ago and are being supplemented by new finds at a relatively slow pace.

In addition to this important difference between the *Forschungsgeschichte* of the 'pagan' and the Jewish magical texts, one more difference must be noted, a difference which is due to the historical processes which culminated in the demise of the ancient world. When we look at the Greek Magical Papyri, we are looking at a magical tradition whose growth and diffusion were mostly stymied by the subsequent Christianization and Islamization of the Mediterranean world. In the Christian and Muslim magical traditions, we can trace some continuities from the world of the Greek Magical Papyri, but the shift from 'pagan' to monotheistic ritual traditions often entailed the 'filtering out' of many elements which were once deemed essential but were now deemed problematic, and even diabolic. In the Jewish case, there was much in the magic of fifth-century Jews that Jewish magicians of the tenth, fifteenth

61 *PGM; GMPT*; Karl Preisendanz, "Die griechischen Zauberpapyri," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 8 (1927): 104–67; William M. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995): 3380–684.

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and twentieth centuries still found very useful, and entirely inoffensive. Thus, one of the most striking features of the Jewish magical tradition is the great textual continuity over long stretches of time, from late antiquity onwards, and this in spite of the lack of any mechanisms of continuous or accurate copying from one generation to another. Apparently transmitted from father to son and from master to disciple, some Jewish magical texts were continuously copied, edited, translated and used from the fifth century to our own times. New fashions came and went, new magical technologies were developed or borrowed, and new religious sensibilities made some magical practices more problematic than others. But some late antique Jewish magical techniques and recipes were still in use in the twentieth century—and some remain in use to this very day.

6 Epilogue: The Road Ahead

To end this survey of the Aramaic and Hebrew magical texts of late antiquity, we may stake a few guesses on what the future might bring to the study of ancient Jewish magic, and some suggestions of which types of research might prove most useful for the successful growth of this hitherto neglected topic.[62] Beyond the need for extensive philological work, including the identification and publication of new sources, the re-examination of old ones, and the production of textual and linguistic corpora and research tools for these specific materials, we may highlight a few other approaches and perspectives which can and should be applied to these intriguing texts. Historical approaches could focus on detailed studies of the development of specific aspects of the Jewish magical tradition, studies which will try to bridge the gaps in our sources by focusing on those practices and formulae which are relatively well documented over long periods of time.[63] Comparative analyses would prove most fruitful, both comparisons within the Jewish magical tradition, especially between Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish magic in late antiquity, and

62 For a fuller discussion of the following points, see Gideon Bohak, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Jewish Magical Tradition," *Currents in Biblical Literature* 8 (2009): 107–50.

63 And note, for example, Michael D. Swartz, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Later Jewish Magic and Mysticism," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8 (2001): 182–93, or Reimund Leicht, "Mashbia' Ani 'Alekha: Types and Patterns of Ancient Jewish and Christian Exorcisms," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 13 (2006): 319–43; Gideon Bohak, "From Qumran to Cairo: The Lives and Times of a Jewish Exorcistic Formula (with an Appendix by Shaul Shaked)," in *Ritual Healing: Magic, Ritual and Medical Therapy from Antiquity until the Early Modern Period*, ed. Ildikó Csepregi and Charles Burnett, Micrologus' Library 48 (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012), 31–52.

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comparisons with non-Jewish magic.[64] A comparison between ancient Jewish and ancient Christian magic, which would highlight both the differences and the similarities between these two estranged sisters, would prove extremely illuminating. It could, for example, elucidate what these traditions borrowed from the Jewish magic of the Second Temple period, what they developed by themselves, and what they borrowed from each other. A more sociological analysis could prove most valuable, especially when applied to the large corpus of Aramaic incantation bowls, where the clients' names and the sheer quantity of the evidence allow for some conclusions with regards to the ethnicity, gender, and social location of those who made use of such magical artifacts.[65] Even questions of orality and literacy, of the transmission of the magical knowledge, of the specialists' familiarity with other Jewish and non-Jewish texts and traditions and of the existence of specific "schools" of Jewish magic might be broached with such sources at hand. And a focus on cultural and religious issues could illuminate the *Weltanschauung* which most of the Jewish magical texts display, or take for granted, including such questions as the origins and causes of health and disease, the meaning of dangers and misfortune, the role of demons, angels, and God in the daily running of the universe, and, of course, the permissibility of practicing magic within a Jewish society.[66] The Jewish magical texts of late antiquity are a large, and ever growing, body of sources, which could and should be utilized in the study of ancient magic, of ancient Jewish magic, and of ancient Jewish society and culture as a whole.

Suggested Readings

Bohak, Gideon, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

64 And see, for example, Shaul Shaked, "*Dramatis Personae* in the Jewish Magic Texts"; Ortal-Paz Saar, "A Study in Conceptual Parallels: Graeco-Roman Binding Spells and Babylonian Incantation Bowls," 24–53.

65 Cf. Morony, "Magic and Society."

66 This, however, is an issue that is best studied both from the 'insiders'' sources (the magical texts themselves) and from the 'outsiders'' discussions of 'magic' (for example, those found in rabbinic literature), for which see Yuval Harari, above, Chapter 8. See also Gideon Bohak, "Conceptualizing Demons in Late Antique Judaism," in *Demons and Illness from Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period*, ed. Siam Bhayro and Catherine Rider, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 5 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2017), 111–33.

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Rebiger, Bill and Peter Schäfer, *Sefer ha-Razim I und II—Das Buch der Geheimnisse I und II*, 2 vols., Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 125, 132 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

Saar, Ortal-Paz, *Jewish Love Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 6 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2017).

Schäfer, Peter and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, 3 vols., Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 42, 64, 72 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994, 1997, 1999).

Schiffman, Lawrence H. and Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1*, Semitic Texts and Studies 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

Shaked, Shaul, James Nathan Ford and Siam Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013).

Vilozny, Naama, *Lilith's Hair and Ashmedai's Horns: Figure and Image in Magic and Popular Art, between Babylonia and Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 2017) (Heb.).

Wandrey, Irina, *"Das Buch des Gewandes" und "Das Buch des Aufrechten": Dokumente eines magischen spätantiken Rituals, ediert, kommentiert und übersetzt*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 96 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

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CHAPTER 17

Gems

Véronique Dasen and Árpád M. Nagy

1 What is a Magical Gem?

Magical gems belong to the general class of amulets made of various materials, durable (gold and silver tablets), or perishable (leather, papyrus, leaves …) that were ubiquitous in ancient daily life for different reasons, mainly medical, social, and religious.[1] They were made by ritual experts who selected the components of different cultural traditions, both ancient and of their own time, that they deemed to be effective.

1.1 *Definition*

'Magical gem' is not an ancient, but an etic category constructed by modern archaeology.[2] The expression designates a specific type of engraved stones of the Roman Imperial period that forms a subset of the larger class of ancient glyptic. The group is characterized by a series of common features. Magical gems were made of semi-precious stones of different colours, such as jasper and haematite, 10 to 40 millimeters in size, usually set in rings or in pendants as pieces of jewellery. Their shapes follow the traditional ones of Greco-Roman glyptics, with a few Mesopotamian and Egyptian variants. They can be regarded as a highly specialised type of ancient talisman. They concentrate in a single object all the active ingredients of ancient magical technology, the powers of the stone, of colour, of jewellery, and of performative words, images, and signs. They are engraved with condensed and elliptic motifs of different origins, chiefly Greek, Egyptian, and Jewish, reflecting the transculturality of magical knowledge in the Roman imperial period.[3] The producers were also inventors, re-interpreting traditional myths and creating new figures, such as the Anguipede. These talismans thus represent at the same time repositories

1 On amulets, V. Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale. Maternité et petite enfance dans l'Antiquité* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015) and V. Dasen, "*Probaskania*: Amulets and Magic in Antiquity," in *The Materiality of Magic,* ed. D. Boschung and J.N. Bremmer (Paderborn: Verlag Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 177–203.

2 The group was for long designated as 'gnostic': see below.

3 This was the subtitle of Campbell Bonner's fundamental work (C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1950).

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of very old traditions, and the result from the newest developments of magical knowledge.[4]

1.2 *Main Characteristics*

The identification of magical gems relies on three formal characteristics (text, images, signs), and on three structural elements (engraving, material, shape), that are combined or isolated.

1.2.1 Text

Like other amulets made by ritual experts, magical gems are mostly inscribed with letters and words that empower the stone.[5] Three types of text are found. The first one consists of divine names. Most of them belong to the Jewish tradition: divine or angelic names (*Iaô, Sabaôth, Michaêl*), and a few Biblical protagonists (*Solomôn*). These names are also used as magical words independent of their original meaning.[6] The names of Greek and Egyptian deities are seldom.[7] The second type of text consists of a word or a sequence of letters written in Greek,[8] strange-sounding names and *formulae* (*vox magica*, or *barbaron onoma, logos*) summoning the hidden name of a deity or demon.[9]

4 S. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln auf geschnittenen Steinen der Antike und Neuzeit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004) published a catalogue of 2800 pieces. The total estimated number of magical gems is about 4000.

5 D. Frankfurter, below, Chapter 23; D. Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians', in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, RGRW 141, ed. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), 159–78.

6 E.g. R. Mouterde, "Le glaive de Dardanos, objets et inscriptions magiques de Syrie," *Mélanges de l'université Saint-Joseph Beyrouth* 15 (1930–1931): 51–139 (= CBd-1555): [Αχαπα]χ[α] (?) Ἀδωναῖε βασμ[α] χα|[ρακ]ω Ἰακὼβ Ἰσὰκ ω (?). For an overview, G. Bohak, "Hebrew, Hebrew Everywhere? Notes on the Interpretation of *Voces Magicae*", in *Prayer, Magic and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. S. Noegel, J. Walker, and B. Wheeler, Magic in History (University Park, PA: Penn State Unversity Press, 2003), 69–82, esp. 71–74.

7 E.g. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum* (London: British Museum, 2001), no 3 (= CBd-382, Artemis), no 61 (= CBd-440, Thoth), no 5 (= CBd-384, Osiris).

8 Latin letters are seldom found: e.g. E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen des Instituts für Altertumskunde der Universität zu Köln* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), 103–104, no 31 (= CBd-1961); S. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 123 (= CBd-1733); no 281 (= CBd-667). On Hebrew letters, pseudo-Hebrew inscriptions and Jewish magical gems, see J. Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2007), 112–114, esp. 163–167.

9 The authoritative analysis of magical names is H.S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm. An Essay on the Power of Words," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 105–158, especially 144–47. In the wider context of Greco-Roman literature see M. Martin, *Magie et magiciens dans le monde gréco-romain* (Paris: Errance, 2005), 215–21. For a glossary of *voces magicae*, W. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995): 3576–603.

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These served as an important tool for the ritual specialist: each *vox magica* or *logos* represents the most suitable formula for invoking a divine power and add a performative value to the stone. Some names occur also on magical papyri, such as *Abrasax* (see above, Chapter 13), others seem to be specific to gems, such as *Orôriouth* (Illustration 17.11; see below, p. 430). Because of the small size of the stone, spells or *logoi* are usually abridged, such as the *iarbatha*-[10] or the *chabrach*-logos.[11] Letter games often suggest an auditory or visual effect, such as the repetition of the seven vowels[12] or palindromes that can be read backward or forward, such as *ablanathanalba*[13] or the *iaeô*-logos.[14] Words can be arranged in geometric forms, such as triangle or wing-shaped *pterygôma*, also found in *lamellae* and magical papyri.[15] Most *barbara onomata* elude the clear identification of cultural tradition. They are primarily exotic elements that illustrate the expertise of the specialist in the eyes of his clients.[16] The third type of text is a meaningful inscription, the acclamation of a god or a prayer asking for help and protection, the granting of charm or favor (*charis*), health (*hygieia*), and luck (*tychê*). The inscription can also indicate the healing purpose of the gem, such as *stomachou*, "for the stomach", *skiôn*, "for the hips" (see below, p. 438). More rarely, the name of the wearer is added, to individualize the wish.[17]

10 Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3587; Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln*, 484.

11 Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3601; Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln*, 483.

12 E.g. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 125 (= CBd-525). On the various meanings of vowels, including a reference to planets, F. Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (Leipzig; Berlin: Teubner, 1925); Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 186–187.

13 Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 202–204; Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 232 (= CBd-630), no 243 (CBd-641).

14 Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3587, 3594, 3596; Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln*, 484.

15 See below, Frankfurter, Chapter 23; cf. A. Mastrocinque, "Les formations géométriques de mots dans la magie ancienne," *Kernos*, 21 (2008): 97–108; C.A. Faraone, *Vanishing Acts on Ancient Greek Amulets: From Oral Performance to Visual Design* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2012).

16 On attempts to explain the origins of magical names, see the critical remarks of Bohak, "Hebrew, Hebrew Everywhere?" (Israel), and H.-J. Thissen, "Etymogeleien," *ZPE* 73 (1988): 303–305; J.F. Quack, "From Egyptian Traditions to Magical Gems. Possibilities and Pitfalls in Scholarly Analysis," in *Magical Gems in their Context*, ed. K. Endreffy, Á.M. Nagy, and J. Spier (forthcoming) (Egypt).

17 E.g. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 134 (= CBd-534).

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1.2.2 Images

Two main types of images are found on magical gems. The first one features traditional, mainly Greek or Egyptian iconographical schemes (e.g. Aphrodite *anadyomenê*, Harpocrates sitting on the lotus flower). The second one uses new schemes, sometimes exclusively created for this genre. The most frequent among these are the representations of the cock-headed, snake-legged figure referred to in contemporary scholarship as the Anguipede, and the lion-headed Chnoubis (see below, p. 418). The iconography of magical gems witnesses the creativity of a new visual idiom translating the religious and spiritual developments of the late Hellenistic and Roman Imperial period. Conventional mythical figures are endowed with new competences, such as Omphale, taking the place of Heracles as patron of women's health, and traditional stories are enriched with new variants associating, for example, Ares with the story of Tantalus (see below, pp. 420–421).

1.2.3 Magical Signs

Magical signs or *charaktēres* are the third distinctive formal element. Letter-like symbols, made of lines, circles or loops ('ring signs') are absent from regular glyptic but quite common on other *magica* devices, such as *defixiones*.[18] Like *voces magicae*, the *charaktēres* were believed to summon as well as evidence direct contact with divine powers. The origin of these signs is still seldom identifiable.[19] Many of them seem to derive from modified Greek letters. A few *charaktēres* are regularly associated with specific deities, like the triple *kappas* with Heracles (Illustration 17.7), and crossed triple *S* with the lion-headed Chnoubis snake[20] (Illustrations 17.4, 17.5 and 17.12).

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18 As a starting point, D. Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 73–78; R. Gordon, "*Signa nova et inaudita*: The Theory and Practice of Invented Signs (*charaktêres*) in Greco-Egyptian Magical Texts," *MHNH* 11 (2011): 15–44; K. Dzwiza, *Schriftverwendung in antiker Ritualpraxis I–IV* (PhD diss., Universität Heidelberg, 2013).

19 See the various attempts of Frankfurter, below, Chapter 23; A. Mastrocinque, ed., *Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum* I (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2004), 90–98; Dzwiza, *Schriftverwendung in antiker Ritualpraxis*; R. Gordon, "Charaktêres between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Reinvention," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, ed. V. Dasen and J.-M. Spieser (Florence: SISMEL, 2014), 350–90.

20 A. von Lieven, "Die dritte Reihe der Dekane oder Tradition und Innovation in der spätägyptischen Religion," *ARG* 2 (2000): 21–36; V. Dasen and Á.M. Nagy, "Le serpent léontocéphale Chnoubis et la magie de l'époque romaine impériale," *Anthropozoologica* 47 (2012): 291–314.

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1.2.4 The Engraving

The first structural characteristic is that most stones are engraved on both sides, and sometimes even on the edge. Moreover, the inscription is not engraved in mirror writing, as for seals, but it can be read directly on the stone, as opposed to 'regular' gems that could be used as signet-rings to identify their owners legally, much like today's numeric signatures.[21] However, neither of these features is unique to magical gems.[22] For example, on gems expressing wishes and on votive gemstones, the inscription is also to be read directly.[23]

1.2.5 The Material

The second structural element is the combination of performative texts, images, and signs with the power of the stone, which is usually of an opaque type. The favorite minerals are, in the order of frequency: jasper (red, green, brown, yellow) including plasma (dark green jasper) and heliotrope (green jasper with red spots); carnelian (from yellowish to red) and chalcedony (from grey to whitish blue); bloodstone or haematite (black, silver-coloured); lapis lazuli (blue).[24] Several correspondences with the prescriptions of ancient lapidaries have been noted. Red jasper is prescribed by Dioscorides as an *okytokion* to ease delivery and is often carved with depictions relating to the birthing process (see below, p. 429, illustration 17.6),[25] yellow jasper often bears the image of a scorpion, according to the notion that "the same heals the same," and milky stones should favour breastfeeding.[26] Other symbolic references are

21 Cf. the two identical signet-rings of Augustus depicting a sphinx: Pliny, *Natural History,* 37.4.10.

22 Á.M. Nagy, "Daktylios pharmakites. Magical Healing Gems and Rings in the Graeco-Roman World," in *Ritual Healing. Magic, Ritual and Medical Therapy from Antiquity until the Early Modern Period*, ed. I. Csepregi and C. Burnett (Florence: SISMEL, 2012), 73, n. 5, with examples.

23 On votive gems, G. Bevilacqua, *Scrittura e magia. Un repertorio di oggetti iscritti della magia greco-romana* (Rome: Quasar, 2010). On gems expressing wishes, A. van den Hoek, D. Feissel and J.J. Herrmann, "More Lucky Wearers: the Magic of Portable Inscriptions," in *The Materiality of Magic*, 309–357.

24 Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen*, 41–49.

25 Dioscorides, *On Medical Material*, 5.160.

26 On scorpions, S. Eitrem, "Der Skorpion in Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte," *Symbolae Osloenses* 7 (1928): 53–82; W. Deonna, *Mercure et le Scorpion* (Brussels: Latomus, 1959). On milky stones, cf. the milky chalcedony with a triple-headed Chnoubis in Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen*, no 18; Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln*, 11.10–5 (= CBd-1892); V. Dasen, "Chnoubis et le lait," in *Allaiter. Histoire(s) et cultures d'une pratique*, ed. Y. Foehr-Janssen, V. Dasen, I. Maffi, and D. Solfaroli Camillocci (Turnhout, in press).

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at work too (see below, p. 439).[27] A few stones are ancient and were recut in the Roman period, and old figures are reinterpreted in a magical context. A fabulous two horse-headed, four-winged figure, grasping snakes on a Greek late archaic chalcedony was transformed into magical gem by an inscription of unidentified *voces*.[28] Christian types too can reuse magical schemes, revealing the religious flexibility of the genres. A Roman heliotrope depicting Isis on one side, Sarapis on the other, was recut in the Byzantine period, transforming Isis into Mary and Sarapis into Christ.[29]

1.2.6 The Shape

A third structural feature is the shape of the stone. Most magical gems are oval with a trapezoid section and two flat faces.[30] Some figures are associated with specific shapes. The heart-shaped type may be of Egyptian origin,[31] whereas the cylindrical types derive from Mesopotamian tradition.[32]

1.3 *Series*

Magical gems can be categorized into series defined by the material, colour, shape and size of the stone on the one hand, and by the relationship of the

27 On the correspondences between colors and bodily fluids, A. Mastrocinque, "The Colours of Magical Gems," in *'Gems of Heaven': Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity, c. AD 200–600*, ed. C. Entwistle and N. Adams (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 2011), 62–68.

28 M. Henig, D. Scarisbrick, and M. Whiting, *Classical Gems: Ancient and Modern Intaglios and Cameos in the Fitzwilliam Museum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), no 518 (= CBd-132). See also Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 579 (CBd-938), late Minoan; no 574 (CBd-933), 5th cent. CE. Further examples, Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, 139, no 225. Stone age thunderstones were also transformed through the addition of images, voces and characteres typical of magical gems; D. Quast, "Ein Steinbeil mit magischer Inscrift aus der Sammlung des Prinzen Christian August von Waldeck," *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 41 (2011): 249–261; C.A. Faraone, "Inscribed Greek Thunderstones as House- and Body-Amulets in Roman Imperial Times," *Kernos* 27 (2014): 257–284.

29 M. Martiniani-Reber, *Antiquités paléochrétiennes et byzantines, III^{e}–XIV^{e} siècles, Collections du Musée d'art et d'histoire* (Genève: Musées d'art et d'histoire: Ville de Genève, 2011), 34, no 9.

30 For the most recent version of the list of shapes of gems developed by E. Zwierlein-Diehl, see P. Vitellozzi, *Gemme e cammei della collezione Guardabassi nel Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Umbria a Perugia* (Perugia: Volumnia, 2010), 31.

31 E.g. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, D. 80 (= CBd-1040); S. Michel, *Bunte Steine—dunkle Bilder: "Magische Gemmen"* (Munich: Biering u. Brinkmann, 2001), no 407–408 (= CBd-778, -779).

32 See e.g. Michel, *Bunte Steine—dunkle Bilder*, no 81 (= CBd-1701); no 125 (= CBd-1735); no 126 (= CBd-1736); no 585 (= CBd-944).

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formal elements mentioned above: text, images and signs. Generally speaking, the magical *praxis* informed the selection of the gem's components. The ritual specialist chose the elements he deemed the most efficient. Although they can be grouped in series, magical gems were never mass-produced, as the number of variants and of possible workshops suggest. Some pieces are unique and were probably made on demand.

2 General Functions

2.1 *As Amulets*

Since the Classical Greek period, amulet rings and gems were regularly used for personal protection. Written sources (e.g. Eupolis, Aristophanes, Ameipsias) mention "magical rings", *daktylios pharmakitês*, as early as 420 BCE.[33] Their images and inscriptions, however, do not seem to have differed from those of 'ordinary' jewellery. Their efficacy was hidden for the non-initiated, like Aladdin's lamp. Such gem amulets were empowered through an oral ritual that left no material trace. This tradition continues into the Roman Imperial period. The opposite practice characterizes inscribed metal sheets (*lamellae*) whose 'magical' powers could be immediately read from the text written on them, though they were not exposed but folded as soon as they were inscribed (see below, Kotansky, Chapter 19). 'Magical' gems thus form a special class, because they are pieces of jewellery that exhibit 'magical' powers, displayed by specific images, texts and signs.

2.2 *As Gems*

In the Roman Imperial period, ordinary gems too could have a protective value secured by their material and by divine or auspicious images and inscriptions without characteristic 'magical' components.[34] The amuletic function of regular glyptic is attested by written sources.[35] These uncertainties, however, do not render the category 'magical gems' useless: there is no doubt that they formed a genre of their own in Roman glyptic. The public display of their performative value as costly pieces of jewellery means a significant shift in the social

33 For an overview of ancient sources, Nagy, "Daktylios pharmakites."

34 Two critical analyses on the definition of magical gems: R. Gordon, "Archaeologies of Magical Gems," in '*Gems of Heaven*', 44–45; Nagy, "Daktylios pharmakites," 82–88 (with a list of healing amuletic gems known from written sources, and not belonging to magical gems).

35 The best overview is Lucian, *The Ship, or the Wishes*, 42–44.

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history of magical practices. It demonstrates that 'magic' was an integral part of Roman Imperial religion.

2.3 *As Jewels*

Magical gems were not amulets for the poor, because they were also part of jewellery and usually mounted in rings and necklaces. Precious metal mounts have survived in some cases, other stones show shell-like chippings on their edges, which suggests that they were once forced out of their mounts. As for regular glyptic, reuses in mounts of later periods are frequent.[36]

2.4 *As Seals*

A magical gem is not meant to be used as a seal: it is a *sphragis*, 'seal' in itself, bearing a print read directly on the stone, as though imprinted by a god, 'sealing' its efficacy.[37] The term *sphragis* alludes also to the therapeutic value of stones as *physika*, natural remedies, as *sphragis* also designates a medical pill carrying a stamp with an image. The most famous example is haematite, deemed to be a powerful medicine as a blood-stauncher, a cure for eye diseases, and venomous bites, according to the Orphic Lapidary.[38] A series of magical gems depicts on one side Solomon as a rider, spearing a prostrate female figure personifying Evil, called Gillô, Gulou, Abyzou or Obuzouth in literary sources (Illustration 17.1a).[39] The reverse bears the inscription *sphragis Theou*,[40] "seal of God."[41] The double meaning of *sphragis* could explain why Solomon's gems were always carved in haematite, and often found broken in half.[42] *Sphragis Theou* could mean "the medicine of God", because the missing

36 See e.g. the 5th c. CE gold necklace from Rome, Piazza della Consolazione; K. Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979), no 281 (= CBd-1253).

37 V. Dasen, "Magic and medicine: the power of seals," in '*Gems of Heaven*', 69–74.

38 *Lapidaire orphique*, 21.

39 CBd-805; On Solomon's gems, Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, 268–270; Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln*, 323–324.

40 The capital is conventional, as the identity of the god invoked is unknown; it could equally be 'one' from the many or 'the One.

41 E.g. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, no D 297 (= CBd-1476); Henig, Scarisbrick, and Whiting, *Classical Gems: Ancient and Modern Intaglios and Cameos*, 233–34, no 511 (= CBd-121); Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 430 (= CBd-788).

42 E.g. H. Philipp, *Mira et Magica. Gemmen im Ägyptischen Museum der Staatlichen Museen. Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Charlottenburg* (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1986), no 189 (= CBd-2142); Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 433 (= CBd-791) and no 443 (= CBd-801).

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part of the gem was pulverized and drunk mixed with a liquid, like a pill.[43] The reverse of a haematite in the British Museum is carved with the inscription *stomachou* designating its power over belly's pains (Illustration 17.1b), which fits well with the haematite's potency over digestion and internal bleeding (cf. Illustration 17.12).[44]

However, the boundary between regular gems used as seals and magical gems was fluid. Between 1998 and 2000, excavations unearthed the remains of the archives of Zeugma (Commagene province, Asia Minor) that had burnt down. The rolled papyrus documents were destroyed, but 102,500 clay seals survived, baked hard in the fire. Two Anguipede-impressions have appeared among the published material.[45] Thus in Zeugma this design decorated signet-rings, but this proposition does not rule out that these rings had a talismanic function as well.

3 Two Historical Perspectives: Tradition and Innovation

Magical gems come from living ritual practice. Their makers aimed at having appealing products by combining two contradictory statements: they claimed that their products represented a repository of ancient, often exotic knowledge and that they represented cutting-edge magical technology, designed to fit the personal needs of the customer.[46]

3.1 *Tradition*

As seen above, the creators of magical gems sometimes transformed gems and stones produced centuries or millennia earlier into amulets, thus using material itself already infused with tradition.[47] On the level of iconography, beside

43 On Lemnian earth ingested as pill, Dasen, "Magic and Medicine: The Power of Seals." E.g. *PGM* III 188: "Grind up a magnet". On ingesting magical powers, *PGM* I, 231–248: "Wash the papyrus and drink the water."

44 Inscriptions relating to belly or stomach occur chiefly on haematite gems. See also CBd-789 and CBd-2586, combining *sphragis Theou* and the Chnoubis-sign.

45 M. Önal, "Deities and Cultures Meet on the Seal Impressions in Zeugma," *Bolletino di Archeologia on line* 1 (2010): 42, no 50 (= CBd-1573); 43, no 51 (= CBd-1574), with further literature.

46 As a starting point: M.W. Dickie, "The Learned Magician and the Collection and Transmission of Magical Lore," in *The World of Ancient Magic*, ed. D.R. Jordan *et al.* (Bergen: Paul Astroms, 1999), 163–193, especially 184; Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm," esp. 154–56. See also V. Dasen, "The Fabric of Myth in Ancient Glyptic", in *Images at the Crossroads: Meanings, Media, Methods*, ed. J.M. Barringer, F. Lissarrague, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, in press).

47 See above, note 28.

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the frequent appearance of Osiris, Harpocrates and the so-called Pantheos figures on the gems, the priority of Greco-Egyptian tradition in so many gems is best exemplified by a series of digestive amulets that scholars designate as the "Phoenix class," after the main iconographical motif. Today twenty-eight gems belonging to this class are recorded.[48] Twenty-seven are made of haematite, and all are oblong oval in shape with a trapezoidal cross-section, except three. Twenty-three are engraved on the reverse with the designation of their function (*pepte*, "digest," or *stomachou*, "for the stomach!"). On the obverse, the structure of the composition is identical on all stones (Illustration 17.2). The longitudinal axis features three motifs: below, a crocodile, in the middle, a deity, on top, a scarab with outstretched wings. Pairs of animals are arranged vertically on each side: swallows facing inwards, scorpions crawling to top, and snakes with 'hands' raised in protection. The main image in the centre may vary: usually a phoenix stands on an ovoid object on a column, but an ibis-headed figure,[49] Harpocrates, a crab, or a lion-headed figure are found too.[50] One can make a sound guess for its date of production. The basic type cannot predate the second quarter of the second century CE, since the iconographic syntagma 'phoenix standing on a globe' first appears in ancient art in 121–22.[51] All pieces with known provenance come from Syria-Palestine.[52]

The iconographic composition of the main type follows an Egyptian tradition reported by Herodotus in the 5th century BCE, that is, about half a

48 *Studies in Magical Amulets*, "The Phoenix Class, Comm. ad Bonner," by Á.M. Nagy, accessed June, 19, 2018, http://www2.szepmuveszeti.hu/talismans/pandecta/1105 with a list of twenty-five amulets. Addenda: C. Dauphin, "A Graeco-Egyptian Magical Amulet from Maẓẓuvah," *'Atiqot* 22 (1993): 145–47; M. Schuler, "North-East Church Complex (NEC)," in *Hippos—Sussita. Sixth Season of Excavations* (*July 2005*), ed. A. Segal *et al.* (Haifa: University of Haifa, 2005), 69–71 (reworked haematite gem fitted into a gold Byzantine setting from the 6th or early 7th centuries); G. Mazor, "A Graeco-Egyptian Amulet from Nysa-Scythopolis (Bet She'an)," *'Atiqot* 71 (2012): 89–92. (made of cobalt glass).

49 Identified by A. Delatte and P. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1964), no 192, as Thoth. See A. Mastrocinque, *Les intailles magiques du département des Monnaies, Médailles, et Antiques* (Paris: Éditions de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2014), no 101 = CBd-1243. See also Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 483–484 (= CBd-841, -842).

50 Mastrocinque, *Les intailles magiques du département des Monnaies, Médailles, et Antiques*, no 184; M. Maaskant-Kleibrink, *Catalogue of the engraved gems in the Royal Coin Cabinet the Hague: the Greek, Etruscan and Roman collections* (The Hague; Wiesbaden: Government Publishing Office, 1978), 357, no 1125 (Harpocrates); Mastrocinque, *Les intailles magiques du département des Monnaies, Médailles, et Antiques*, no 551 (crab). Lion-headed figure: Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, no D 102 (= CBd-1098).

51 The syntagma is first found in the imperial coinage; A.M. Nagy, "Magical Gems and Classical Archaeology," in *'Gems of Heaven'*, 79.

52 Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 60. The three gems cited in note 48 confirm this hypothesis, as they come from the territory of Israel-Palestine too.

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millennium before the appearance of the Phoenix class gems, and with no representations known so far.[53] The phoenix buries his father's body in an egg kneaded from myrrh, then takes it to Heliopolis, where he places it in the sanctuary of the sun god. The animals engraved along the central axis of the gems (crocodile, phoenix, scarab) represent the sun god both on a natural level, in different phases of his celestial journey, as well as on a mythological one (Horus burying Osiris). The pairs of animals on the two sides represent Isis and Nephthys. The gem indicates where the story takes place: the Egyptian name of Heliopolis is '*Iunu*'— 'City of Columns'.[54] A single piece shows two phoenixes on a column.[55] The description of Horapollon (5th–6th cent. CE) provides the key for its interpretation:

> When the Phoenix is about to die, he casts himself vehemently upon the ground, and is wounded by the blow, and from the ichor, which flows from the wound, another phoenix is produced; which as soon as it is fledged, goes with his father to the city of the sun in Egypt; who when he is come thither, dies in that place at the rising of the sun. And after the death of his father, the young one departs again to his own country; and the priests of Egypt bury the phoenix that is dead.[56]

The phoenix gems of the Roman Imperial period thus unite in a single tradition sources spanning a millennium or more, from Herodotus to Horapollon. In doing so, they neatly exemplify the cross-cultural nature of the gems. The function of these gems, however, is very pragmatic and personal: they aim at controlling the stomach with the help of the deity, as the inscription commands: *pepte*, "digest."

3.2 *Innovation*

3.2.1 New Schemes

3.2.1.1 *The Anguipede*

Some iconographic schemes are found exclusively on magical gems and related amulets. They were most likely created by experts using specific elements of ritual practice from different cultural traditions in order to construct new,

53 Herodotus, 2.73.

54 Á.M. Nagy, "Le phénix et l'oiseau-benu sur les gemmes magiques. Trois notes sur le phénix gréco-égyptien," in *Phénix: Mythe(s) et Signe(s), Actes du colloque international de Caen (12–14 octobre 2000)*, ed. S. Fabrizio-Costa (Bern; Berlin; Brussels: P. Lang, 2001), 73.

55 Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, no D 104 (= CBd-198).

56 *Hieroglyphica*, 2.57, trans. A.T. Cory, *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo Nilous* (London: Chthonios, 1987).

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powerful images. The most frequent is the scheme called Anguipede, made of a cock-headed and snake-legged human figure in armour, holding a whip in one hand, a round shield in the other (Illustration 17.3).[57] Even though most iconographical motifs in the visual language of the Roman Imperial period are well-known, this particular figure does not derive from either the Egyptian or from the Greco-Roman tradition. Instead, it is a new construction related to the God of Israel. The heterogeneous elements of the scheme can only be viewed as a unity by arranging the material around the Hebrew root *GBR*. While both the cock's head and the male body can be read as "*gever*," the latter word is represented in the form of a warrior in a cuirass (*gibbor*). The double snake's legs also relate to the same stem. This iconographic motif is a general symbol of the *gigantes* (*gibbor*) in Greco-Roman art, and, in this case connotes "gigantic" valour.[58] All these elements constitute the image of a mighty (*gvurah*) God—in short, the Mighty One (*ha-Gvurah*). The elements that combine to form the figure of the Anguipede serve, if translated into Hebrew, to define a mighty name of power, the name of the Allmighty. The ritual specialist could call upon *Deus Israel* through the image. According to E. Zwierlein-Diehl, the shield designates God as *hyperaspistês*, "who protects with his shield," well-known in the Septuagint.[59] The image thus does not represent God, only one of his names, and hence does not contravene Jewish Law. It is an invention that should be understood as an intellectual attempt to incorporate the God of Israel into the broader magical *koinê* of the Roman Imperial period—and not solely through his names, but also through a unique image.[60]

57 Á.M. Nagy, "Figuring out the Anquipede: Magical Gems and their Relation to Judaism," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 15 (2002): 159–72. More than 670 ancient and post-antique gems are today recorded with the Anguipede; Á.M. Nagy, "Figuring out the Anquipede-bis. A Statistical Overview," in *Magical Gems in Their Context*.

58 In this scheme, the motif of the double snake's legs is not connected to the biblical giants (e.g. Gen 6.4). In the Bible, '*gibbor*' can also serve as a name of God; for an overview of the sources, see Á.M. Nagy, "Figuring out the Anguipede and his relation to Judaism", 166, n. 42.

59 Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen*, 30–31.

60 *Contra* G. Bohak, *Early Jewish Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 197, see also 198, 279 (without counter-arguments regarding the iconography). The gem Bohak gives as an example (CBd-451) is post-antique, and is thus irrelevant for the ancient meaning of the Anguipede. The statistical analysis of the more than six hundred Anguipede-gems has justified the hypothesis that the ancient use of the scheme cannot be separated from Deus Israel; Á.M. Nagy, "Figuring out the Anquipede-bis."

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3.2.1.2 *Chnoubis*

A second familiar figure on magical gems is the lion-headed and radiate snake, Chnoubis (Illustrations 17.4, 17.5, and 17.12). Both his name (Chnoubis, Chnoumis) and sign, a triple crossed *S*, are regularly found engraved on the gems. The 'Chnoubis' gems transformed a minor figure of Egyptian astrology, belonging to one of the 36 Egyptian decans, into an important solar deity understood in different cultures of the Roman period.[61] His power is chiefly used for digestive problems (see below, pp. 441–42).[62] Chnoubis appears on three classes of gems, which differ in their material, colour, shape, and size. The first class associates the image of the radiate lion-headed serpent, the name Chnoubis, at times spelled as Chnoumis, and the Chnoubis-sign made of a crossed triple *S*. These gems were made of transparent green stones, such as chrysoprase, lentoid ovals with two convex faces, approximately 20 mm in length (Illustration 17.4). The chief constituent of the second class is simply the Chnoubis sign, sometimes complemented with the name. These are engraved on stones of a similar shape, also transparent, but smaller (ca. 10 mm) and white in colour, such as chalcedony (Illustration 17.5). In the third class, Chnoubis appears on uterus gems as one of the deities protecting the womb. These stones are black (haematite), flat on both faces, between 15–25 mm, and are inscribed with a *vox* (*orôriouth*) and *logos* (*soroor-*) characteristic of uterus-gems (Illustrations 17.11 and 17.12).

Ritual experts thus incorporated the newest religious concepts on gems, a medium that favored the invention of iconographic schemes. The earliest pictorial representations of the Crucifixion appear on magical gems too.[63]

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61 For an overview of Rabbinic sources mentioning the Chnoubis-scheme, M. Schlüter, *Derāqôn und Götzendienst. Studien, ausgehend von mAZ II 3* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1982).

62 With earlier bibliography, Dasen and Nagy, "Le serpent léontocéphale Chnoubis." The most detailed analysis: J.F. Quack, *Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Dekanen und ihrer Rezeption in der griechisch-römischen Welt*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, in press. We would hereby like to thank the author for providing us with access to the relevant parts of his manuscript. Ca. 400 gems are today recorded with the Chnoubis snake.

63 Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, 283–284, no 457; J. Spier, *Late Antique and Early Christian Gems* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2007), 73, no 443 (= CBd-815). On this piece and the issue in general, see J. Engemann, "The Argument from Silence. Iconographic Statements of 1981 on Faked Gems Reconsidered," in *'Gems of Heaven'*, 208–213. On gems depicting Jesus's crucifixion see F. Harley-McGowan, "The Constanza Carnelian and the Development of Crucifixion Iconography in Late Antiquity," in *'Gems of Heaven'*, 214–20, and Roy D. Kotansky, "The Magic 'Crucifixion Gem' in the British Museum," *GRBS* 57 (2017): 631–659.

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3.2.2 New Mythical Variants

3.2.2.1 *Heracles*

The function of Heracles on magical gems also refers to new developments of his story in the Roman Imperial period. His main role is to control the belly, as suggested by the 3 *kappas* engraved that are usually interpreted either as the first letter of the word *kolike* repeated three times (Illustration 17.7), or as the abbreviated form of a magical formula like *Kok Kouk Koul*, found on a magical papyrus against fever.[64]

His proverbial reputation of heavy eater, stuffing on everything without being sick, could explain the efficacy of his image. The depiction of the god was good for digestion, because it implied that as Heracles binges on food, the owner wishes to be free from intestinal distress too. But the power of Heracles is not restricted to the stomach.[65] Heracles' gluttony is also sexual. He is an insatiable lover, engendering an impressive number of children. His intimacy with women's bellies and procreation may have qualified him as the guardian of women on magical gems, controlling a belly, *koilia, gastêr*, that comprises the uterus and all related disorders and events, including delivery.[66]

3.2.2.2 *Omphale*

A striking new mythical form was used in Greco-Roman antiquity for ensuring a safe pregnancy. It is found on a series of chiefly red jasper gems depicting a naked woman whom an inscription and attributes identify as Omphale engaged in unexpected activities (Illustration 17.6).[67] The woman is in a frontal position, squatting with spread legs, with a distended belly that may allude to pregnancy and hence to a delivery posture. Her right hand is raised, and she waves a club, the left hand on the knees.

This magical Omphale substitutes for Heracles, who was known as her lover. Whereas the hero throttles a lion, Omphale fights against a donkey that embodies in Egyptian tradition the action of demons menacing feminine health and health in general. In the Late Period, the god Seth usually personifies these dangers in the form of a malevolent donkey sexually threatening

64 *PGM* XXXIII.19. Interpreted as an abbreviation for the *Trishagion*: A.A. Barb, "Review of Delatte, Derchain *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes*," *Gnomon* 41 (1969): 302, n. 1.

65 The physician Alexander of Tralles (6th c. CE), *Twelve Books on Medicine*, 2.377, recommends in case of colics: "On a median stone, engrave Heracles standing upright and throttling a lion; set it in gold ring and give it to the patient to wear" (trans. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 63).

66 V. Dasen, "Le secret d'Omphale," *Revue archéologique* (2008): 265–281 and Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 94–97.

67 Dasen, "Le secret d'Omphale," and Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 87–108, fig. 3.4.

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women as well as men. In spells, the sperm of the god is compared with the poison of a scorpion, capable of provoking an abortion, as he tried to do to Isis when she was pregnant with Horus.[68] On the gems, the donkey thus embodies the hostile side of Seth, the incubus that causes miscarriage or harms the process of delivery, as the squatting pose of the woman depicts. However, this threatening power is under control, as Omphale's defensive gestures suggests. It contains a visual play upon words, as Greek *skutalē*, the club, metaphorically means "phallus." Omphale and the donkey thus use the same weapon. The club held by the woman identifies both the threat and its domination.

These gems thus provide the unexpected model of a woman, often pregnant, always combative, mastering her body, and warding off malevolent influences from herself. The ritual specialists might inform their clients that Omphale is not just the queen of Lydia, the lover of Heracles, and the mother of his son, but she is also a *magos*, a wizard, who actively controls her body, knows how to expel malevolent entities, and watches over the health, sexuality and fecundity of women. This prophylactic function could explain the fashion of the club in ancient female jewellery.[69] Another word-play arises with the double-meaning of her name, Omphale, designating the navel as well as (metaphorically) the genitals.[70] The figure of Omphale is also found in other media, such as gold pendants and even in the terracotta figurines from Roman Egypt that depict a squatting woman who protects the household—called 'Baubo' figurines.[71]

3.2.2.3 *Other Myths*

The stories of other Greco-Roman deities and heroes undergo new developments. They now serve personal needs, securing health, love, and success. The image of Mars Ultor is thus involved with Tantalos in order to control flows of blood. This Greek hero was tormented by unquenchable thirst in the

68 On the demonic character of Seth from the late Period through Roman Egypt, D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt. Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 112–15. On his association with a donkey, Dasen, "Le secret d'Omphale," and Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 87–108, with earlier bibliography.

69 Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 107–108, fig.3.17. On the club/*skutalē* as jewellery, Dasen, "*Probaskania*: Amulets and Magic in Antiquity," in *The Materiality of Magic*, 177–203, 185–189.

70 Fulgentius, *Mythologies*, 2.2: "[Heracles] is conquered by lust, for *onfalon* in Greek means the navel, for lust is ruled in the navel by women, as says the Holy Scripture" (trans. L.G. Whitbread).

71 Dasen, "Le secret d'Omphale"; V. Dasen, "Une 'Baubô' sur une gemme magique," in *Chemin faisant. Mythes, cultes et société en Grèce ancienne. Mélanges en l'honneur de Pierre Brulé*, ed. L. Bodiou *et al.* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), 271–284.; Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 102–7, fig. 3.12.

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underworld: the gods punished him by making the water withdraw from him whenever he wanted to drink. He is found on a series of haematite stones bearing an inscription in *pterygôma*: "You are thirsty, Tantalos, drink blood."[72] A blue onyx or *nicolo* gem depicts on one side Perseus flying away holding the head of Medusa and a *harpê*; the inscription on the back names the opponent of the hero, a disease and no more a monster: *fu*[*ge*] *podagra* [*P*]*erseus se diôki* "Flee away, Podagra, Perseus pursues you" (Illustration 17.9).[73] This gem, however, is unique rather than part of a series.

New mythical competences characterize some Egyptian deities too. A series of gems depict the fetus in the form of Harpocrates. A red jasper with a standard uterine scene on the obverse (see below, pp. 439–40) bears on the back the inscription *epi podia*, "Onto your little feet!" commanding the child to come out.[74] Other gems show the young god on the shoulders of Bes, the protector of forthcoming and newborn babies, standing before Chnoum who makes children on his potter's wheel.[75] A cloudy carnelian in the Michigan collection shows the divine child sitting on the uterus and holding the handle of the key, controlling the time of his birth (Illustration 17.8).[76]

4 How, Where and When Were They Made?

4.1 *Who Made Them?*

Greco-Roman and Egyptian traditions mingle on magical gems in order that the specialist and the client can visualise metaphorically the magical action and ensure its performative efficacy. Debates about the identities and locations of the purveyors of magical gems have been inconclusive. The production of

72 A.A. Barb, "Bois du sang, Tantale," *Syria* 29 (1952): 271–284; Faraone, *Vanishing Acts*, ch. 3 (with a different interpretation of the inscription).

73 Á.M. Nagy, "Engineering Ancient Amulets: Magical Gems of the Roman Imperial Period," in *The Materiality of Magic*, 220–233. Cf. *fuge, fuge, Podagra* in Marcellus Empiricus, *De medicamentis*, 36.70.

74 A.E. Hanson, "A long-lived 'quick-birther' (okytokion)," in *Naissance et petite enfance dans l'Antiquité*, ed. V. Dasen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2004), 265–80.

75 V. Dasen, "Représenter l'invisible: la vie utérine sur les gemmes magiques," in *L'embryon humain à travers l'histoire. Images, savoirs et rites*, ed. V. Dasen (Gollion: Infolio, 2007), 41–64; Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 129–36.

76 Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, D 141 (= CBd-1055); Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 136–137, fig. 4.15. See also Athena fighting a gigantic snake on a red jasper: C. Wagner and J. Boardman, *A Collection of Classical and Eastern Itaglios, Rings and Cameos* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2003), no 576 (= CBd-1187); V. Dasen, "One God May Hide Another. Magical Gems in a Cross-Cultural Context," in *Magical Gems in their Context*.

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magical gems required two distinct kinds of expertise: first, the knowledge of a ritual expert who designed a gem associated with some magical *praxis*, and who performed a rite, *teletê*,[77] when the object was finished; second, the practical skills and tools of an engraver, *daktyliographos*,[78] who carved the gem following the instructions of the ritual expert. A single person may have combined both skills.

That models were used is confirmed by inscriptions. At times we find descriptions of the process in literary sources;[79] at times we see that the prescriptions for creating the gem were simply misunderstood. On a black stone in Budapest, for example, the engraver copied the indication of a manual: "… as is prescribed," instead of the magical formula itself.[80] Magical gems were also produced in antiquity by simply copying extant pieces that were not related to some *praxis*. In such cases, the engraver was able to produce the gem by himself.

4.2 *Production Centers*

The existence of large groups of gems with the same iconography attests to a production with a consistent and broadly distributed style; but we are unable to ascertain what could have been the structure of this production in terms of workshops and engravers. It is generally held that magical gems were made and used predominantly in the eastern part of the Mediterranean.[81] It is almost certain that the gems were not created in a single center.[82] In general, the

77 The fundamental study on *teletê* is still S. Eitrem, "Die magischen Gemmen und ihre Weihe," *Symbolae Osloenses* 19 (1939): 57–85.

78 On engraving technique, see E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben* (Berlin: De Grutyer, 2007).

79 For the list, Á.M. Nagy, "Engineering Ancient Amulets," 213, n. 33.

80 CBd-4. See also L. Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres, cachet et pierres gravées de style orientales* II (Paris: Hachette, 1923), 218–219, no A 1259; C.A. Faraone, "Scribal Mistakes, Handbook Abbreviations and Other Peculiarities on Some Ancient Greek Amulets," *MHNH* 12 (2012): 64–66.

81 The first list of pieces with known provenance: Philipp, *Mira et Magica*, 8, n. 18. Supplements: R. Kotansky, "The Chnoubis Gem from Tel Dor," *The Israel Exploration Journal* 47 (1997): 257–60; Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln*, 2, n. 7. An important new find is the piece discovered in Augsburg, since it was recovered from a dated stratum (turn of 1st/2nd c. CE); G. Platz-Horster, *Kleine Bilder grosse Mythen. Antike Gemmen aus Augsburg* (Augsburg: Friedberg Likias, 2012), 40–41, no. 13 (= CBd-1151). See also the three gems cited in note 48, above.

82 For an overview, Gordon, "Archaeologies of Magical Gems," in '*Gems of Heaven*,' 40–41. For provincial workshops, see e.g. the group of Chnoubis-gems belonging to the so-called "Kerbenstil-group"; Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, 261–264, nos. 417–23 (= CBd-109–113; CBd-122, CBd-153).

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search for origins is of uncertain value, since an engraver can work anywhere, following the instructions of a written recipe or simply copying another gem. Moreover, a talisman can travel with its owner and end up anywhere. Recent work on the findspots of the Anguipede gems reveals that these amulets were widespread throughout the Roman Empire.[83]

4.3 *Chronology*

Determining the chronology of production has long been regarded as impossible. Most gems are deprived of archaeological contexts. Moreover, distinguishing between ancient and post-antique pieces is still an extremely difficult task.[84]

In the 17th century, Jean l'Heureux and Jean Chifflet first attributed the production of magical gems to the Roman Imperial period. Further progress was made only recently. E. Zwierlein-Diehl developed a chronological framework demonstrating that the production perhaps began already in the late Hellenistic period, its heyday falling in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, followed by a slow decline.[85] Research carried out in recent years has demonstrated that the post-antique history of these objects is also important to consider (see below, pp. 444–45).

The invention of magical gems fits into a wider religious process in antiquity, an epigraphic 'turn' from the beginning of the 1st century CE, as can be observed in many Mediterranean cultures.[86] Before this period, ritual traditions of a marginal sort were primarily transmitted through oral tradition. Then written records became increasingly widespread, and different traditions of 'magic'—broadly defined—merged into a cross-cultural science of sorts.[87] The most spectacular sign of the change is the spread of esoteric names and

83 Nagy, "Figuring out the Anquipede-bis."

84 It is becoming more and more evident that one of the most important steps in coming research will be to distinguish ancient and post-antique gems, as was pointed out by Joachim F. Quack (J.F. Quack, "review of Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*," *Gnomon* 76 [2004]: 262). The identification of ancient specimens may be difficult as some ancient pieces were produced by experts, others not, and the production was continued in the post-antique period. Modern imitations were often patterned upon the engravings published in 17th and 18th c. catalogues. See e.g. Philipp, *Mira et Magica*, no 206 (= CBd-2157); Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 622 (= CBd-981) with a list of similar pieces.

85 Zwierlein-Diehl, "Dating Magical Gems," in *Magical Gems in Context*.

86 See below, Kotansky, Chapter 19, and Frankfurter, Chapter 23.

87 Most recently: Bohak, *Early Jewish Magic*, 143–44, 189; Gordon, "Archaeologies of Magical Gems," in *'Gems of Heaven'*, 43–44; Faraone, "Text, Image and Medium: The Evolution of Greco-Roman Magical Gemstones," in *'Gems of Heaven'*, 50–61.

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signs in new media like curse tablets, papyri and amulets made of precious metal. Most likely the invention of magical gems was also part of this change.

5 Who Used Them, and How?

5.1 *Who?*

The use and function of the gems during the lifetime of their owners are very difficult to reconstruct. Very few gems come from archaeological contexts.

A number of questions relate to the social, gendered, ethnic and religious status of the clientele. Magical gems cannot be regarded as products of inferior quality, the preserve of lower classes.[88] Their range of quality does not differ from that of ordinary gems similarly made of semi-precious stones. They are generally carved on both sides with special motifs and inscriptions instructed by experts, and hence they were quite expensive to acquire.[89] Examples mounted in gold jewels surely belonged to the social élite.[90] Inscriptions and literary sources confirm that both women and men wore them as well.[91]

5.2 *How?*

Literary and archaeological sources provide glimpses of a performative context. Gemstones could be used in various ways that are described in magical papyri and illustrated archaeologically. Magical prescriptions suggest that the stones were probably consecrated before being used.[92] In the Greek Magical Papyri a stone engraved with Sarapis "seated holding a scepter on top of which an ibis stands" must be inserted into a ring: "In case of need, the spell must be said holding the ring in the left hand and waving a spray of olive and laurel twigs toward a lamp. The ring is then put on the index of the left hand,

88 This was the traditional view: "while [magic papyri] were the property of specialists, magical technicians, the amulets teach us what was current among the people." (M.P. Nilsson, "The Anguipede of the Magical Amulets," *HTR* 44 (1951): 61). See also Delatte and Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes*, 18; Philipp, *Mira et Magica*, 15.

89 Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen*, 16–17.

90 See e.g. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, D. 1 (= CBd-452); Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 219 (= CBd-617), Michel, *Bunte Steine—dunkle Bilder*, no. 124 (= CBd-1734), and the gold necklace CBd-1253 (cited, above, note 36).

91 E.g. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 120 (= CBd-520): Zyroua; Michel, *Bunte Steine—dunkle Bilder*, no. 133 (= CBd-1741: Alexandra/-os; CBd-2765 (Amphiklés).

92 *PGM* XII. 201–209; Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen*, 14–15. See also, above, note 77.

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going to sleep holding the stone to the left ear."[93] *Voces magicae* and *logoi* were probably pronounced loudly, like the seven vowels, which had to be sung, "with an open mouth, undulating like a wave."[94] In the *Sword of Dardanos* (see below, p. 443) the gem is put under the tongue and turned while reciting a spell.[95] In another set of instructions a stone is fastened to a vessel and then a spell pronounced;[96] in another, a food offering is made.[97]

Like all amulets, magical gems in principle had to be in contact with the body of the patient. A number of gems were thus set in rings,[98] or worn as pendants. The suspension loop may be cut in the stone, as in digestive gems, or set in metal, and then made to hang near the place to cure. Galen thus advised to hang green stones engraved with the image of Chnoubis at precisely the length that would allow the stone to touch the chest above the stomach.[99] The gem should be tied near the ailment: around the neck, the arm or the thigh, or on the back. Its efficacy varies according to the place; the stone *aetites* impedes miscarriage when it is attached to the left arm, but it provokes delivery when it is attached to the back.[100]

Some stones were too large, soft, or fragile to be worn as rings, and these were instead made to be held, such as the haematite stones with the reaper's motif, which were most likely carried in a pouch or leather case, and attached to the body.[101] Many stones were intentionally broken. No text describes the whole procedure involved, but some mention grinding up a stone. Here one may guess that part of the stone was pulverized and drunk in water.

Medical texts and archaeological finds confirm that gems and other amulets were included in medical practice. Soranos of Ephesus alludes to their use during delivery: "Some people say that some things are effective by antipathy, such as the magnet and the Assian stone and hare's renet and certain other amulets

93 *PGM* V. 447–448. On the association of magic and divination, M. Monaca, "Gemme magiche e diviniazione," in *Gemme gnostiche e cultura ellenistica*, 135–52; and *Atti dell'incontro di studio "Gemme gnostiche e cultura ellenistica", Verona, 22–23 ottobre 1999*, ed. A. Mastrocinque (Bologna: Pátron, 2002), 135–52.

94 *PGM* V. 24; Philipp, *Mira et Magica*, 22.

95 *PGM* IV. 1741–1746.

96 *PGM* LXII. 40–45.

97 *PGM* IV. 2878–2890.

98 Cf. the gold ring in Marcellus Empiricus, *De medicamentis* 39, 23.

99 On Galen, see below note 130. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen*, 49.

100 E.g. Damigeron-Evax, 1 (R. Halleux and J. Schamp, *Les lapidaires grecs* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1985), 235.

101 F.M. Schwartz and J.H. Schwartz, "Engraved Gems in the Collection of the American Numismatic Society: 1. Ancient Magical Amulets," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 24 (1979): 188–90. Cf. the stomachic stone in illustration 17.12.

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to which we on our own part pay no attention. Yet one should not forbid their use; for even if the amulet has no direct effect, still through hope it will be possibly make the patient more cheerful."[102]

5.2.1 Religious/Ritual Contexts

A number of magical gems, we have seen, were produced following the prescriptions of Greco-Egyptian magical papyri. We know about fifteen recipes that prescribe the use of gems and rings,[103] and more or less corresponding gems can be found for each of them. The best example of connection between papyri and magical gems is a love charm called the *Sword of Dardanos* (see below, pp. 443–44). But this praxis is found only on two examples of inscribed gems, whereas another love charm, the *Aphrodite anadyomenê* or *arrôriphrasis*-type is attested by almost fifty examples. Thus the *Sword of Dardanos* appears less significant as an historical context for gem production. A survey of other gem types recommended by the magical papyri gives a similar picture. The gem-types demanded in the recipes are attested only in a few *exempla*,[104] or the instructions themselves are simply too general for us to decide whether any given gem really belongs to the *praxis* or not (see below, pp. 442–44).

The reverse is also true. The two most significant deities on the gems, Chnoubis and the Anguipede, are depicted on over a thousand pieces (more than 25 percent of all magical gems) but are not attested in any extant magical papyri. These gems are certainly 'chiefly Graeco-Egyptian'—as Campbell Bonner once wrote—but *not in the same way* as the papyri.[105] The two sources—the magical gems and the papyri—overlap, but not completely: they represent two related 'dialects of magic' in the Roman imperial period. The pictorial motifs that are most important on the gems are not present in the papyri, while the gem-motifs that are mentioned in the papyri are underrepresented on the gems.

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102 Soranus, *Gynecology* 3.42.

103 See the list, note 79 and now Paolo Vitellozzi, "Relations Between Magical Texts and Magical Gems. Recent Perspectives", in S. Kiyanrad *et al.*, eds., Bild und Schrift auf 'magischen' Artefakten, (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 181–253.

104 E.g. *PGM* I 144–149 and the five related "Hêliôros"-gems. As a starting point see Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 265 (= CBd-159).

105 It is important to note that the majority of magical papyri come from a single context, although the precise identification of the find has not been possible. See above, Dieleman, Chap. 13, and K. Dosoo, "A History of the Theban Magical Library," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 53 (2016): 251–74, for the most recent overview of the so-called Theban library, also known as the Anastasi-papyri.

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6 To What Purpose?

The function of the majority of magical gems is not known. It can only be deduced from the overall visual system: that is, the combination of pictures, text and signs engraved upon them, as well as from the nature of the stone. As far as we can tell, most magical gemstones had a positive value. In a number of cases, the inscriptions (such as *diaphylasse*, 'protect', *sôzon*, 'save me') suggest that they had a function of general protection, irrespective of the material, shape and iconography of the gemstones.[106] They usually bear the image of a deity that secures protection. Examples of aggressive or black magic are very rare. A curse engraved on a rectangular haematite is directed against thieves and appeals to justice (see above, Chapter 15).[107] The two main functions concern health (6.1) and love (6.2), very few were used for harmful magic.

6.1 *Health*

Many of the larger gems were used to repel or heal various diseases. Their symbolic efficacy relates to popular representations of disease expressed by metaphors in medical texts. A recurring theme is that of conflict, which corresponds to a very ancient and widespread notion of sickness as an active agent entering the body. In magical texts, diseases are not caused by heat or cold, or by the unbalance of humours, but by a *daemon* that must be expelled. The disease is personified, and is asked to flee, like the *podagra* (gout), pursued by Perseus as seen above (Illustration 17.9).[108]

Medical vocabulary also expresses agonistic notions. The latin term *morbus*, transliterated in Greek letters, is engraved on a hematite gem from Aquileia.[109] The word has an active connotation expressed by accompanying verbs and adjectives: *morbus* assaults; it wants; it is ferocious (*saevus*); it attacks from

106 See e.g. *diaphylasse*: Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, D 257 (= CBd-1435), 'Pantheos' (polymorphic deity); Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 28 (= CBd-407), bust of Sarapis. *Sôze*: Wagner and Boardman, *A Collection of Classical and Eastern Itaglios, Rings and Cameos*, no. 263 (= CBd-1256), Zeus holding Nike.

107 A. Mastrocinque, "Studi sulle gemme gnostiche XI. Amuleto per il respiro; attributi di Persephone; gemma contro i ladri," *Thetis* 10 (2003): 91–92; G. Nachtergael, "Quelques inscriptions grecques sur des intailles magiques," *Aegyptus* 83 (2003): 186–87.

108 On these formulae, R. Heim, "Incantamenta magica Graeca et Latina," *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie, Supplementband XIX* (1892): 465–576; C.A. Faraone, "A Greek magical gemstone from the Black Sea: amulet or miniature handbook?," *Kernos* 23 (2010): 79–102.

109 A. Mastrocinque (ed.), *Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum* II (Rome : Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2008), Aquileia no. 6 (= CBd-2903).

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inside; it must be expelled. On the Aquileia gem, the word is written in reverse, visualising the (anticipated) retreat of the disease.[110]

The agonistic dimension of disease and cure explains many iconographic choices, such as the frequency of warlike figures, like Mars-Ares, always in military equipment, or Solomon the rider, brandishing a spear. The disease may also be visualised as a bound or defeated enemy, as on the Solomon gems (Illustration 17.1).[111] The figure of Heracles on medical gems also refers to Hippocrates. Some believed that Hippocrates descended not only from Asclepios, through his father, but from Heracles through his mother. An apocryphal letter to Artaxerxes compares Hippocrates, who defeats "wild" and "bestial" diseases, with Heracles, the champion of dangerous animals. Divinised, he was supposed to have received in Greece the same honours as Heracles and Asclepios. Roman period coins from Cos depict on the obverse a seated Hippocrates, inscribed with his name, on the reverse the bust of Heracles holding a club.[112]

6.1.1 Which Disease?

On gems, very common ailments such as toothaches or fractures are absent. Whereas anatomical votive offerings of arms, hands, legs, and feet abound in sanctuaries of healing deities, no gem alludes to the care of limbs—apart from the series "for the hips," depicting a bent reaper on a large, oval, haematite, using a sickle to harvest and symbolically cutting the pain.[113] One would also expect to find personifications of fever, epilepsy, or rabies, diseases which doctors were powerless to cure, but these disorders were treated with other means, such as *phylacteria*.[114] Eye diseases form another specific group.[115]

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110 See also H. Harrauer, "SOUBROM, Abrasax, Jahwe u.a. aus Syrien," *Tyche* 7 (1992): 39–44, esp. 40–41, pl. 8,1. On the procedure, Faraone, *Vanishing Acts*, 51–67.

111 E.g. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no 179 (= CBd-577), with two enemies bound, the hands in the back, dancing or agitated, behind a pantheistic figure holding a cartouche with Iaô, and no 382 with a bound 'Sethian' creature (= CBd-753).

112 Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 96.

113 C. Bonner, "Amulets Chiefly in the British Museum, A Supplementary Article," *Hesperia* 20 (1951): 301–45; e.g. CBd-7, -783, -787. The *harpē* of Perseus has a similar function (Illustration 17.9).

114 See below, Kotansky, Chapter 19. For a typology of diseases, A. Mastrocinque, "Medicina e magia. Su alcune tipologie di gemme propiziatorie," in *Medicina e società nel mondo antico. Atti del convegno di Udine (4–5 ottobre 2005)*, ed. A. Marcone (Florence : Le Monnier Università, 2006), 91–100.

115 P. Gaillard-Seux, "Les maladies des yeux et le lézard vert," in *Nommer la maladie. Recherches sur le lexique gréco-latin de la pathologie*, ed. A. Debru and G. Sabbah (Saint-Etienne: Université de Saint-Etienne, 1998), 93–105.; C.A. Faraone, "A Case of Cultural (Mis)translation?; Egyptian Eyes on Two Greek Amulets for Ophthalmia," in *The Frontiers*

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Most visual and textual components of the gems relate to an internal and hence mysterious process (gout, bites or stings, bleeding). The largest series of medical gems relate to diseases involving the belly, and more specifically the uterus and the stomach, which have common characteristics. Both are credited with unusual capacities, such as an independent will and uncontrolled movements, usually dangerous ones. Both are located in the abdomen, a mysterious area producing noises. No demon enters the body, but the organ itself is active; it must be mastered, which implies different types of magical power.

6.1.2 Uterine Gems

By far the largest series of magical gems concerns the protection of the uterus.[116] This type is usually engraved on haematite or "bloodstone," an iron oxide that was believed to control flows of blood according to ancient notions of natural sympathies, warding off the frightening risks of hemorrhage by its staunching power.[117] (Red jasper was also used for similar reasons). Haematite stone was also empowered by a male generative potency, as this mineral was believed to be the petrified blood of Ouranos castrated by Chronos.[118]

The iconography itself mingles elements from Greek medicine and Egyptian ritual traditions. A number of metaphorical representations of uterine life, for example, correspond to those developed in Greek medical texts.[119] In its simplest form, the gem features a pot upside down which represents the womb as a medical cupping-vessel (Illustration 17.11). Wavy lines seem to depict the ligaments and the uterine tubes discovered by Herophilos at Alexandria, though they may also derive from the Egyptian hieroglyphic sign for uterus. Variants have the shape of the ram's horns of the god Chnum who protects the development of the embryo.[120] The scene is encircled by the *ouroboros*, creating a 'magical space' protecting the uterus and the embryo against malevolent forces. The shape of the cupping-vessel makes visible the demonic autonomy of the organ, with an independent attractive capacity, underscored by the use of haematite and magnetite.[121]

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of Ancient Science: Essays in Honor of Heinrich von Staden, ed. K.-D. Fischer *et al.* (Berlin: De Grutyer, 2015), 93–110.

116 Over 200 gems.

117 First pointed out by Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen*, 41–42.

118 *Orphic Lapidary* 652–663 (ed. Halleux and Schamp, *Les Lapidaires grecs*, 117–18).

119 R.K. Ritner, "A Uterine Amulet in the Oriental Institute Collection," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43 (1984): 209–21; A.E. Hanson, "Uterine Amulets and Greek Uterine Medicine," *Medicina nei Secoli* 7 (1995): 281–99; Dasen, "Représenter l'invisible"; Dasen, "Le secret d'Omphale"; Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale.*

120 CBd-1957; Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 64, fig. 2.6.

121 On magnetite and the attractive power of the uterus, Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 37–41, 60–62. On the comparison of the uterus with a cupping vessel, e.g. Hippocrates,

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Other iconographic elements refer to medical concerns. At the mouth of the cupping-vessel, a key with three, five, six or seven teeth symbolizes the opening and closing mechanism of the womb, so central in ancient gynecology. Different movements must happen at the proper time. The womb must open periodically to release menses, attract male seed, then close to retain it; and it must prevent miscarriage or loss of nourishment for the fetus. At the time of delivery, it opens again to release the child. Variants depict Horus the child seated on the uterus, holding the key, as if he controlled the moment of his birth (Illustration 17.8). This notion appears in the Hippocratic treatises explaining that the child actively participates in the delivery. Like a chick emerging from its shell, he breaks the membranes when he starts lacking food in the womb.[122]

Different deities appear on the uterine gems. Most of them are Egyptian, all endowed with special powers related to regeneration (Osiris with Isis and Nephtys), pregnancy and childbirth (the ram-headed god Chnum; Chnoubis; Horus the child; and the dwarf-god Bes). On the reverse, spells aim at controlling the movements of the womb inside the female body: "Stop (or contract) womb, lest Typhon overcomes you", "Fasten the womb in the right place."[123] Inscriptions refer to the demonic power of Orôriouth (Illustration 17.11)[124] or to the control of pains in the belly (three *kappas*).[125] Some formulae are abridged versions of longer spells found in magical papyri, such as the *soroor* formula for delivery that refers to an entity that opens doors and releases binding.[126]

Iconographic variants stress the animal nature of the uterus. On some gems, the cupping-vessel is transformed into an octopus, as if the teeth of the key had become arms.[127] References to the octopus (*polypodos*) are found in medical texts. Galen calls the ligaments of the womb tentacle, *plektanê*. Like tentacles, the womb itself is described as covered with small suckers, *kotulêdona*, which are believed to keep the chorion in place. The cotyledons

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On Ancient Medicine, 22 (Littré I, 626–628). The male sex is attracted by the uterus as if by a cupping-vessel, Oribasius (4th c. CE), *Medical Collections*, 22.3.

122 Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 136–38. Hippocrates, *Nature of the Child* 30.1, 30.8 (Littré 7.530–532, 536).

123 On similar spells in magical amulets, C.A. Faraone, "New Light on Ancient Exorcisms of the Wandering Womb," *ZPE* 144 (2003): 189–98.

124 Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3595 (after the Egyptian *w'rt, w'r.tj*, for uterus); Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln*, 486 (with earlier bibliography).

125 E.g. Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 95–96, fig. 3.9, with Heracles (= CBd-1631).

126 Ritner, "A Uterine Amulet in the Oriental Institute Collection," 218–19; Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3599.

127 V. Dasen, "Métamorphoses de l'utérus, d'Hippocrate à Ambroise Paré," *Gesnerus* 59 (2002): 167–186; Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 72–77.

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or suckers are in the cavity of the uterus and train the embryo to suckle the nipples of the breast.[128] Soranos mentions another comparison attributed to Herophilus. He notes that in women who had children, the *stoma* of the womb becomes callous, "as Herophilus says, similar to the head of an octopus or to the larynx."[129] The image of the octopus suggests the peculiar ability of the womb to move in all directions, its marine associations evoke the fluids, which fill the womb: seed, blood, and *amnios*.

6.1.3 The Stomach

Similar observations can be made about the stomach, another organ credited with independent will and strong needs. The stomach is hungry or lazy, enjoys or loathes food. It is also the seat of uncontrolled, usually negative, emotions. In Latin literature, the adjective *stomachosus* denotes a bad tempered person, or one who suffers from unpleasant feelings, anger, irritation, or anxiety. A discontented stomach can complain and even speak. Its language is made of rumbling noises, expressed by a number of verbs, *crepare, crepitare, murmurare, latrare*.

The so-called digestive amulets are numerous, with many variants. Beside Heracles throttling the lion, the main figure ruling over the belly is the lion-headed snake Chnoubis (Illustration 17.4).[130] The inscription on the reverse of a black stone depicting Chnoubis specifies: "Keep Proclus's stomach healthy."[131] Galen recommends to use green jasper, set it in a ring:

> The testimony of some authorities attributes to certain stones a peculiar quality which is actually possessed by the green jasper, worn as an amulet, it benefits the stomach and esophagus. Some also set it in a ring and engrave on it the radiate serpent, just as King Nechepsos prescribed in his fourteenth book, I myself have made a satisfactory test of this stone. I made a necklace of small stones of that variety and hung it from my neck at just such a length that the stones touched the position of the cardiac orifice. They seemed just as beneficial even though they had not the design that Nechepsos prescribed.[132]

128 Soranus, *Gynaecology* 1.14.

129 Soranus, *Gynaecology* 1.10.

130 Dasen and Nagy, "Le serpent léontocéphale Chnoubis."

131 Mastrocinque, *Les intailles magiques du département des Monnaies, Médailles, et Antiques*, no. 259. See also Dasen and Nagy "Le serpent léontocéphale Chnoubis," 310, no 8a with a list of similar texts engraved on gems.

132 Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis et facultatibus*, 9.19 (Kühn XII, 207); trans. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 54. Cf. *Lithika*,

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The iconography has multiple meanings and indeed governs other organs in the body, such as the heart and the uterus. On a haematite in the Skoluda collection (Illustration 17.12), the radiate snake stands upright beside the womb, whereas the inscription advertises that it will appease pains in the stomach.[133] This large range of functions is reflected in Greek and Latin vocabulary. The terms denoting the belly are often vague and can designate different regions of the abdomen, including the womb. *Stomachos*, for example, can designate other organs with an opening, *stoma*, such as the uterus, the bladder, the esophagus, the larynx. The range of 'stomachic' diseases is hence very wide and applies to women as well as to men.[134]

Another variant of so-called 'digestive' gems depicts an ibis, either tied to an altar, with clumps of papyrus on top, or devouring a snake or scorpion, with inscriptions commanding *pesse* or *pepte* "digest!"[135] The inscription, as on uterine gems, addresses the organ itself, as if the stomach was an autonomous being. The symbolic efficacy of the birds is based on analogy: as the ibis devours venomous animals, the stomach should harmlessly digest. Another type of 'digestive gem' depicts the phoenix (see above, pp. 424–26). The insistence on diseases originating in the belly may be partly due to the frequency of food poisoning and intestinal parasites. These diseases grew to societal concerns.[136]

6.2 *Love*

Erotic magic is well represented by engraved stones, lapis lazuli, magnetites, haematites and jaspers.[137] It is important to note that the category also includes sexually aggressive magic.[138] The most frequent variant is composed of lapis

35 (Halleux and Schamp, *Les Lapidaires grecs*, 170). Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 55, notes that in the sacred book of Hermes, the third decan of cancer has a similar name, Chnoumis, used "as a *phylacterion tou stomachou*". On the use of stones and amulets by Galen, J. Jouanna, "Médecine rationnelle et magie: le statut des amulettes et des incantations chez Galien," *Revue des études grecques* 124 (2011): 44–77.

133 Michel, *Bunte Steine—dunkle Bilder*, no. 145 (= CBd-1752).

134 On stones and gender, Dasen, "Sexe et sexualité des pierres," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, 195–220, Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 25–51.

135 H. Seyrig, "*Invidiae medici*," *Berytus* 1 (1934): 1–5; Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 51–53.

136 V. Dasen, "Healing Images. Gems and Medicine," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 33 (2014): 177–91.

137 Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, 115–122.

138 J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990). E.g. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 497 (= CBd-855); D. Jordan, "Il testo greco di una gemma magica dall'Afghanistan (?) nel museo Pushkin, Mosca," in *Gemme gnostiche e cultura ellenistica*, 61–69: "Separate Hierakion … son of Serenilla, from Serenilla, daughter of Didyme."

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lazuli gems depicting Aphrodite alone, holding up her hair in a seductive gesture (Aphrodite *anadyomenê*), associated with the *vox magica arrôriphrasis* (which is only featured on this type of gem).[139]

A minor series of gems depicts the pair Ares/Mars and Aphrodite, with Ares binding Aphrodite or the opposite.[140] Eros may also torture Psyche, bound to a pillar, with a torch. R. Mouterde has shown that some depictions conform to prescriptions found in the *Sword of Dardanos*, preserved in the Paris Magical Papyrus.[141] The ritual expert prescribes to take a magnetic stone and to engrave it on one side with the figure of Aphrodite holding her hair and riding on Psyche, burnt by Eros holding a torch, on the other side, with Psyche and Eros embracing each other, with *vocals* below their feet.[142] This prescription corresponds with unusual precision to the scene depicted on a magnetite gem in Perugia (Illustration 17.10).[143]

The image of Harpocrates could also serve erotic magic. A heliotrope in Vienna depicts the young god seated on the lotus flower, surrounded with rows of vowels on the obverse; on the back, a prayer asks the civic spirit Agathos Daimon to make Didyme love Sarapion.[144] A magical papyrus prescribes a similar scene: "and whenever you perform this spell, have an iron ring with yourself on which has been engraved Harpocrates sitting on a lotus, and his name is Abrasax."[145] This recipe is frequently substituted for others on the

139 Ca. 50 items. E.g. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 78 (= CBd-478); Michel, *Bunte Steine—dunkle Bilder*, no. 110 (= CBd-1724). G. Ficheux, "La chevelure d'Aphrodite et la magie amoureuse," in *L'expression des corps. Gestes, attitudes, regards dans l'iconographie antique* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 181–94. *Arrôriphrasis* occurs also in love-charms, e.g. *PGM* IV. 2234, 2928.

140 G. Bevilacqua, "Ares e Afrodite sulle gemme magiche," in *Gemme gnostiche e cultura ellenistica*, 13–25; Dasen, *Le sourire d'Omphale*, 48, fig. 1.7.

141 *PGM* IV. 1716–1870.

142 *PGM* IV. 1722–1743.

143 Vitellozzi, *Gemme e cammei della collezione Guardabassi*, 419–420, no. 518. See a similar jasper gem once in Beirut: R. Mouterde, "Le glaive de Dardanos, objets et inscriptions magiques de Syrie," *Mélanges de l'université Saint-Joseph, Beyrouth* 15 (1930–1931): 51–139. For the detailed analysis of the *praxis*, see P. Vitellozzi, "The Sword of Dardanos: New Thoughts on a Magical Gem in Perugia," in *Magical Gems in their Context*.

144 E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Die antiken Gemmen des Kunsthistorischen Museums in Wien, III, Die Gemmen der späteren römischen Kaiserzeit, II, Masken, Masken-Kombinationen, Phantasie- und Märchentiere Gemmen mit Inschriften* (München: Prestel Verlag GmbH & Co., 1991), no. 2195 (= CBd-2438). Similar amulets: Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, no. D 190 (= CBd-1386); Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, no. D 206 (= CBd-1065); Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 134 (= CBd-534).

145 *PGM* LXI. 31–32, trans. *GMPT*. See e.g. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen. Zu Bildern und Zauberformeln*, 19.1.a_9 (= CBd-95).

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gems. A heliotrope in the British Museum is carved on one side with the young god in the solar bark; on the other side a love spell asks to give Theanous grace (*charis*) in order to seduce Serapammon.[146] Some gems combine on one side Aphrodite, on the other Harpocrates.[147]

7 After Antiquity

From the end of the 4th century until the 6th and 7th centuries, a dual process can be observed. Ancient gems continue to be reused in new mounts, and schemes previously used on magical gems were adapted to other devices, such as metal rings, medals and pendants made of bronze and soft stone. In the middle ages no distinction was made between magical gems and the rest of this ancient amulet production; they were all held in high esteem.[148] They were used to decorate reliquaries and mounted in signet rings worn by the elite.[149] Many types were described in medieval books on stones (*Lapidaria*) and in encyclopaedias, continuing into the Renaissance.[150]

The earliest scholarly work on magical gems was published in 1657 by Jean l'Heureux (Johannes Macarius, c. 1551–1614) and Jean Chifflet (Johannes Chifletius, 1588–1660). They were the first scholars who identified the type and coined them "Gnostic"[151] It was they who compiled the first catalogue of the gems, which proved to be definitive for knowledge of the genre for centuries to come.[152] At the same time scholars began to disregard magical gems as bizarre and crude. Magical gems went out of fashion in the 18th century with the revival of classicism. They were neglected by scholars, who denied them any

146 Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 134 (= CBd-534).

147 Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 133 (= CBd-533).

148 As a starting point: E. Zwierlein-Diehl, "Magical Gems in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods: Tradition, Transformation, Innovation," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, 87–130; Á.M. Nagy, "Étude sur la transmission du savoir magique. L'histoire post-antique du schéma anguipède (V^e^–XVII^e^ siècles)," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, 131–55.

149 See the Anguipede gems mentioned in Nagy, "Étude sur la transmission du savoir magique," 138–44, e.g. the reliquary of Saint Blaise (c. 1040/1050), or the authenticating seal of French king Louis VII (1174). On the seal of Hubert Walter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, see M. Henig, "Archbishop Hubert Walter's gems," *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 136 (1983): 56–61. (Chnoubis).

150 Zwierlein-Diehl, "Magical Gems in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods."

151 J. Chiflet and J. Macarius, *Abraxas seu Apistopistus, quae est antiquaria de gemmis basilidianis …* (Antwerp: 1657).

152 Modern imitations were often patterned upon the engravings published in 17th and 18th c. catalogues. See e.g. Philipp, *Mira et Magica*, no. 206 (= CBd-2157); Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, no. 622 (= CBd-981) with a list of similar pieces.

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artistic value. Their interest was also marginalized through the learned opposition of religion and magic.[153] At the same time, magical gems were excluded from collections of classical gems because they were regarded as belonging to Egyptian, Early Christian, or Medieval collections.[154]

Research on magical gems received new momentum in the early 20th century, simultaneously with the rediscovery of Greek magical papyri. A pioneer study by Armand Delatte appeared in 1914,[155] followed in 1950 by the monumental analytic survey by Campbell Bonner, and the innovative researches of Alphonse Barb. Still, research on magical gems remained on the periphery of classical studies until the end of the 20th century. The change came with the turn of the millennium, when that great dichotomy between religion and magic in ancient cultures became invalid.[156]

Suggested Readings

Magical gems are scattered in many museums. The catalogues of most major collections are now published. The most important ones are those in the British Museum in London,[157] the Cabinet des médailles in Paris,[158] the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin,[159] and the Vienna, Cologne,[160] and Hamburg collections.[161] Italian collections are catalogued by A. Mastrocinque, who also undertook to collect ancient and often lost pieces known from early modern publications.[162] Several collections are still unpublished or are in course of publication, such

153 The main 19th c. discussions: J.J. Bellermann, *Drei Programmen über die Abraxas-gemmen* (Berlin: In der Fr. Nicolaischen Buchhandlung, 1820); C.W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains, Ancient and Medieval* (London: Bell and Dalby, 1864).

154 E.g. Philipp, *Mira et Magica*, 2–3, R. Gordon, "Magical Amulets in the British Museum," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 15 (2002): 666–67.

155 A. Delatte, "Études sur la magie grecque. III–IV," *Mémoires du Musée royal d'histoire naturelle de Belgique* (1914): 5–96.

156 Most recently, e.g. J. Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); H. Wendt, *At the Temple Gates. The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

157 Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*.

158 Mastrocinque, *Les intailles magiques du département des Monnaies, Médailles, et Antiques*.

159 Philipp, *Mira et Magica*.

160 Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen* (*AGD*) (Vienna), and Zwierlein-Diehl, *Magische Amulette und andere Gemmen* (Cologne).

161 Michel, *Bunte Steine—dunkle Bilder* .

162 A. Mastrocinque, ed., *Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum* I (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2004) and Mastrocinque, ed., *Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum* II (Rome: Istituto poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2008).

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as the collection kept in Saint-Petersburg, Hermitage.[163] A new turn is now offered by the expanding research possibilities of *The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database* (*CBd*), edited by the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest in cooperation with the University of Fribourg, and realized through international collaborations. Over 2700 objects are now catalogued, with growing detailed commentaries that serve as a reference for scholars.[164]

For further reading see:

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Dasen, Véronique, "Amulets, the Body and Personal Agency," in *Material Approaches to Roman Magic: Occult Objects and Supernatural Substances*, ed. Stuart McKie, Adam Parker (Oxford: Oxbow, 2018), 127–35.

Dasen, Véronique, "Probaskania: Amulets and Magic in Antiquity," in *The Materiality of Magic*, ed. J. Bremmer and D. Boschung, (Paderborn: Verlag Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 177–203.

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Dasen, Véronique and Jean Michel Spieser, eds., *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance* (Florence: SISMEL, 2014).

Faraone, Christopher A., *Vanishing Acts on Ancient Greek Amulets: From Oral Performance to Visual Design* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2012).

Faraone, Christopher A., *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

Michel, Simone, *Bunte Steine—dunkle Bilder: "Magische Gemmen"* (Munich: Biering u. Brinkmann, 2001).

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163 O. Ya. Neverov, "Les amulettes magiques de l'Ermitage. Essai d'une classification," in *Gemme gnostiche e cultura ellenistica*, 195–205.

164 See http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans. Á.M. Nagy is grateful for the support of NKFI grant K 119979.

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Zwierlein-Diehl, Erika, *Antike Gemmen und ihr Nachleben* (Berlin: De Grutyer, 2007).

Zwierlein-Diehl, Erika, "Dating Magical Gems," in *Magical Gems in their Context*, ed. K. Endreffy, Á.M. Nagy, and J. Spier (forthcoming).

Zwierlein-Diehl, Erika, "Magical Gems in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods: Tradition, Transformation, Innovation," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, ed. V. Dasen and J.-M. Spieser (Florence: SISMEL, 2014), 87–130.

ILLUSTRATION 17.1 Haematite. 20 × 12 × 2 mm. Solomon. London, British Museum, G439, EA 56439 (CBd-805)
a (obverse): Rider on horseback trampling over a female figure lying on the ground.
b (reverse): Inscription in four lines: στ|ομ|αχ|ου → στομάχου. 'For the stomach!'
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ILLUSTRATION 17.2 Haematite. Phoenix. Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts, Classical Collection, 55.154 (CBd-2)
a (obverse): Phoenix standing on a globe placed upon a column. Below, a crocodile, to right; above, a scarab with outstretched wings. On the two sides, pairs of animals: swallows facing inwards, scorpions crawling to top, and snakes
b (reverse): Inscription in three lines: πε|πτ|ε → πέπτε. 'Digest!'. Beneath: Chnoubis-sign
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ILLUSTRATION 17.3 Heliotrope. 12 × 8 × 2 mm. Anguipede. London, British Museum (CBd-603)
a (obverse): Frontal view of cock-headed Anguipede in armour. Head to left. Whip held in the right hand, round shield in the left hand. Inscription in the shield: ια|ω → Ἰάω
b (reverse): Inscription: φυλ → φύλ<ασσε>. 'Protect me!'
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ILLUSTRATION 17.4 Chrysoprase. 13.2 × 9.6 × 5.2 mm. Chnoubis. Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts, Classical Collection, 53.155 (CBd-6)
a (obverse): Lion-headed Chnoubis, with seven rays
b (reverse): Chnoubis-sign. Around: χνουβισ → Χνουβίς
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ILLUSTRATION 17.5 Chalcedony. 10.1 × 8.6 × 4.9 mm. Chnoubis. Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts, Classical Collection, 62.21.A (CBd-152)
a (obverse): Variant of Chnoubis-sign: three S-shaped lines, below: a horizontal line framed by short notches at the ends
b (reverse): Plain
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ILLUSTRATION 17.6 Red jasper. 12 × 16 mm. Omphale. The J. Paul Getty Museum 82.AN.162.80a (CBd-2338)
a (obverse): Frontal view of Omphale represented as a nude squatting pregnant woman, facing right, right hand raised high and holding a club, left hand resting on the knee. On her head: the *leontê*?
b (reverse): Ithyphallic donkey facing left. Inscription below the animal: triad of vocales YYY
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ILLUSTRATION 17.7 Red jasper. 15 × 11 × 3.5 mm. Heracles, London British Museum G 224(CBd-762)
a (obverse): Horizontal inscription in one line: KKK
b (reverse): Heracles throttling the Nemean lion which stands on its hindlegs. His club rests in the free field behind him, on the right
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ILLUSTRATION 17.8 Carnelian. 29 × 23 × 4 mm. Harpocrates. University of Michigan, Special Collections Library SCL-Bonner 19 (CBd-1055)
a (obverse): Ouroboros enclosing Harpocrates sitting on top of a uterus in the shape of cupping-vessel, closed by a seven-bitted key. His head is crowned with the solar disk, right hand raised to mouth, left hand resting on the knobbed handle of the key. Inscription inside the Ouroboros: ακτιωφιρεσχιγαλνεβουτοσουαληθιααεηιουω → vocales, incipit of ακτιωφι-logos
b (reverse): Inscription in eight lines: ορωριο|υθαεμει|ναεβαρωθ|ε ρρεθωρα|βεανιεμ||εα, five characteres|ιαηιεηι|ουωηιη → ορωριουθ, αεμειναεβαρωθερ-palindrome
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ILLUSTRATION 17.9 Nicolo. St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, Ж.1517 (GR-21714).
a (obverse): Flying Perseus holding the head of Medusa and a *harpê*.
ΦΥ[- -] / ΠΟΔΑΓΡΑ / [-] ΕΡΣΕΥΣΣ / ΕΔΙΩΧΙ
Φύ[γε] ποδάγρα, [Π]ερσεύς σε διώχι i. e. διώκει.
b (reverse): Greek inscription: *fu*[*ge*] *podagra* [*P*]*erseus se diôki* "Flee away, Podagra, Perseus pursues you".
© THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM. PHOTO: SVETLANA SVETOVA, KONSTANTIN SINYAVSKI

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ILLUSTRATION 17.10 Magnetite. 21,8 × 16,2 × 3,3 mm. Aphrodite, Eros and Psyche. Sword of Dardanos. Perugia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 1526
a (obverse): Aphrodite sits astride the winged Psyche, who is flying with outstretched arms. Below them, the winged Eros standing upon a globe, lifting a burning torch with both hands up towards Psyche. Inscription behind Aphrodite: αχμα[γεραρ]φερμει. Around Eros, on both sides: π|ακαπακα|αδων αιε|βαεμαχαρ|ακωιακ||ωβιαω → πακαπακα Ἀδωναῖε βαεμα χαρακω Ἰακώβ, Ἰάω
b (reverse): Naked Eros (on the left) embracing Psyche wearing a long robe (on the right). Inscription below them: ηηηησσσσσσ| ηηηησσσσσσ
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ILLUSTRATION 17.11 Haematite. 20 × 15 × 3 mm. Uterus with deities (Anubis, Chnoubis, Isis)
a (obverse): uroboros encircling a cupping-device symbolising the uterus closed with a seven-bitted key. On top a group of deities. From left to right: the mummy of Anubis, the lion-headed Chnoubis, Isis-Tyche, right hand raised, left hand lowered beside the body and holding a cornucopia. Inscription in the free field: αεηιουω. Outside the Ouroboros: σοροορμερφεργαρβαρμαφριουηριγξι → σοροορ-logos
b (reverse): Inscription in two lines: ορωρ|ιουθ → ορωριουθ
LONDON, THE BRITISH MUSEUM G 546 (CBD-176). PHOTO CHR. A. FARAONE

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ILLUSTRATION 17.12 Haematite. 46.2 × 24.9 × 5.8 mm. Chnoubis. Skoluda Collection M085 (CBd-1752)
Scene enclosed by an Ouroboros
a: At the top, a cock-headed Anguipede in armour and mantle, head to right, right hand raised high and holding a whip, left hand holding a round shield. Below, a scarab with outstretched wings, both wings topped by a uraeus. Below, a lion walking to left, trampling a body lying on the ground and approaching a female figure standing to right in a long robe, hand raised to mouth. Below the lying figure, a crocodile, head to left. Inscribed on the two sides of the scarab: ιαω → Ἰάω. Inscription outside the Ouroboros, partly illegible → Ἰαεω-palindrome, Ἀβρασάξ
b: The lion-headed Chnoubis-snake upright, without coils. Beside Chnoubis, on the left, a uterus in the shape of a cupping vessel, with a key. To the right of Chnoubis, a further key (bottom) and a Chnoubis-sign (top). Inscription around: χνουβισπαυσονπονοντουστομαχουαβρασαξ → Χνουβίς, παῦσον πόνον τοῦ στομάχου, Ἀβρασάξ, Chnoubis, stop the pain of the stomach, Abrasax
© HAMBURG, SKOLUDA COLLECTION. PHOTO S. MICHEL AFTER MICHEL 2001B, PL. 24, NO 145

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CHAPTER 18

Figurines, Images, and Representations Used in Ritual Practices

Andrew T. Wilburn

In the early 1970's, the Musée du Louvre purchased a small, unbaked mud figurine, a clay vessel, and a lead tablet that were said to be from Egypt (Illustration 18.1).[1] The object depicts a woman on her knees, with her arms and hands twisted behind her back. Thirteen iron pins pierce the clay figurine at significant points in its anatomy—the scalp, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the chest or heart, the pudenda, the soles of the feet, the hands and the anus. The tablet that accompanied the figurine records a complicated spell to force a woman named Ptolemais to love Sarapammon. The publication of this remarkable object by P. du Bourget, conservator of the Département des Antiquités égyptiennes, soon followed in 1975; the inscription on the tablet was published the following year by S. Kambitsis.[2]

This figurine was modeled with attention to specific anatomical and portrait-like features, including hairstyle and jewelry. Scholarly interest and debate has raged over the object because of its similarity to a set of spell instructions preserved in the Great Magical Papyrus of Paris, (*P. Bib. Nat. Supp.* gr. no. 574 = *PGM* IV 296–466), a text dated to the fourth or fifth century CE.[3] Ancient ritual

1 I would like to thank my research students at Oberlin College: Gabriel Baker ('07), Ploy Keener ('08), Christopher Motz ('08), and Eush Tayco ('08), as well as Elizabeth Edgar, for their assistance in preparing this manuscript. Two colleagues, Andaleeb Banta, Senior Curator and Department Head, Prints, Drawings and Photographs, Baltimore Musuem of Art, and Matthew Rarey, Assistant Professor of Art History, provided guidance as I thought about the function of representation in art. I am indebted to the editors, David Frankfurter and Henk Versnel, for comments on an earlier draft. I also wish to acknowledge the Thomas F. Cooper '78 Endowed Classics Faculty Support Fund and the Jody L. Maxmin '71 Classics Department Faculty Support Fund at Oberlin College, which provided extensive support for acquiring the images that illustrate this essay.

2 P. du Bourguet, "Ensemble magique de la période romaine en Égypte," *Revue du Louvre,* 25 (1975): 255–57; S. Kambitsis, "Une nouvelle tablette magique d'Égypte, Musée du Louvre inv. E27145, 3e/4e Siècle," *BIFAO* 76 (1976): 213–23.

3 J.J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 93–98; R.K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 112–13; C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambrdige, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999),

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ILLUSTRATION 18.1 Unfired clay female figurine pierced with needles, plaque with magic text, and deformed ovoid (egg-shaped) vase 4th–5th century CE. E27145a; E27145b; E27145c.
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texts often functioned like mystical (but professional) cookbooks, supplying the ritual specialist with a series of complex recipes for use in a vast number of situations. The instructions require the practitioner to create two figurines, a standing statue of Ares and a woman on her knees and pierced with thirteen pins, and to deposit the objects near a grave of one who has died before their appointed time. The congruence between the spell instructions and the preserved image of the woman suggest that the practitioner consulted a similar text in the creation of the figurine of the woman.

The inscription on the lead tablet discovered with the Louvre doll invokes a substantial corpus of divinities and the spirits of the dead to deliver a

esp. ch. 2, M.W. Dickie, "Who Practiced Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and in the Late Roman World?," *Classical Quarterly* 50 (2000): 563–83; C.A. Faraone, "The Ethnic Origins of a Roman-Era Philtrokatadesmos (*PGM* IV 296–434)," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, RGRW 141, ed. P.A. Mirecki and M. Meyer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 319–43; D.G. Martinez, *Michigan Papyri XVI: A Greek Love Charm from Egypt* (*P. Mich. 757*) (Atlanta: Scholars' Press, 1991). C.A. Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of 'Voodoo' Dolls in Ancient Greece," *Classical Antiquity* 10 (1991): n. 27; R.W. Daniel and F. Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), no. 47; E. Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 143 n. 17; M. Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges dans l'antiquité romaine* (Paris: Hermann éditeurs, 2010), 105–9; J. Dieleman, "Magie en seksualiteit in Romeins Egypte," *Phoenix* 57 (2011): 36–52; A.T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus and Spain* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 28–30, 77.

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submissive Ptolemais to her suitor, preventing her from sexual activity with other men. The inscribed text iterates the desired result, laying out the process by which the spirits will compel Ptolemais. It might seem that the image is not necessary for the performance of the rite. The figurine, however, is critical to the operation of the ritual, as the spell preserved in the papyrus begins with instructions for the creation of the wax or clay images, and the recipe includes directives that detail physical features and poses that the images should take. The complex procedures were intended to permit the practitioner to use an image, in this case a figurine, to dictate the course of events in the world.

This chapter will engage with the concept of representation in ritual practices and the relationship between an image or simulacrum of a person or thing and the person or thing that it purports to represent. In the ancient Mediterranean, images appear as important features of a variety of rites, and ancient cultures differentially understood and exploited the relationship between the representation and its antecedent. My intent in the following discussion is to survey the manifold ways in which images and representations operated, how they were constructed, and what guidelines were used in their creation. Our evidence for the use of representations takes multiple forms, ranging from literary depictions of practitioners who might use images for personal gain, through the ritual instructions consulted in the creation of images, and finally, to the physical remains of these representations.

The subject of this chapter, 'images,' encompasses a variety of representations ranging from two-dimensional forms, such as drawings inscribed on tablets or papyrus, to reliefs, carved on buildings or carefully cut into gemstones or amulets, through freestanding figurines or statuary, molded or created in a range of media. This chapter is intended as a survey, and other chapters in the Guide will cover the medium or subject as a separate topic. Drawings appear frequently in the spells of the Greek and Demotic Magical Papyri (Dieleman, Chap. 13), as well as inscribed on binding tablets (Eidinow, Chap. 15) or magical bowls (Bohak, Chap. 16). Engraved images, or representations in shallow relief, frequently accompany text on amulets (Kotansky, Chap. 19) and gemstones (Dasen and Nagy, chap. 17). Reliefs, paintings, and mosaics enlivened both public and private structures in antiquity, where the images may have served a protective purpose; these media will be covered in the chapter on architecture (Wilburn, Chap. 20).

I have chosen to adopt a chronological rather than thematic framework for this material, as this permits a broader understanding of the development of the practice over time and space. This discussion initially will survey the use of figurines and images in Egypt and the Near East, and then turn to the use of representations in Greece, the larger Hellenistic world, and finally the Roman

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empire. Often, the discussion will move between public and private rites, as many of the ritual procedures associated with state or public ritual practices (perhaps regarded as polis or state 'religion') were transferred or adapted to private use.[4] The range of imagery used in ritual practice varies over this geographic and temporal space. The corpus of representations and descriptions of images can suggest several common themes in ritual use of depictions:

(1) As early as the Old Kingdom in Egypt, representations of human subjects were utilized to destroy, incapacitate or otherwise influence enemies or adversaries. Representation permitted the practitioner to exact his will on the figurine or image, and through the representation, on the person or thing represented. Images of divinities functioned in a similar fashion, allowing the practitioner to control the gods, or to force the represented deity to exact vengeance on or constrain the intended victim. Finally, erotic rites, which often employed two separate images, were designed to compel amorous affection and sexual intercourse rather than destruction.

(2) Images could serve as recipients of cult, or could witness and affirm the performance of a rite.[5] The representation of divinity might be conceived as an extension of the spirit or force, much like a cult statue. The image of a divinity might be purpose-made, or the practitioner could choose to employ an image created for another purpose, such as terracotta figurine.

(3) Representation could take many forms, but precise modeling was not necessary for efficacy. Most depictions used in rituals were anthropomorphic or zoomorphic, although aniconic images also could establish a relationship between an object and a victim. A representation may have differentiated only the sex of a target, and where specificity does occur in an image, it draws greater attention to those details that have been selected.

(4) Rituals often utilized mechanical processes, undertaken with the image, to achieve the desired result. Representations were burned, melted, crushed or broken to destroy a victim. Alternatively, the practitioner

4 J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* ed. M.W. Meyer and P.A. Mirecki (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 13–27; J. Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 92–102; E.J. Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature: Prophecy, Necromancy, and Other Arts of Knowledge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 21–22.

5 C. Barrett, "Terracotta Figurines and the Archaeology of Ritual: Domestic Cult in Greco-Roman Egypt," in *Figurines grecques en contexte: Présence muette dans le sanctuaire, la tombe et la maison*, ed. S. Huysecom-Haxhi, et al. (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2015), 404–5, 414.

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could physically remove, bury or isolate a depiction. Finally, the intended process might be acted out, using the representations as stand-ins to mime the desired result; images were bound, pierced, or shown engaged in some activity, such as lovemaking. Sometimes complementing spoken or written words, gesture played a vital role in ritual enactment.

1 How do Images "Work"?

In some rites, images were believed to affect the thing that was represented through perceived congruencies. James Frazer articulated this concept most famously: "the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it."[6] Frazer proposed that magical efficacy was based on two factors: sympathy, the belief that perceived similarities underlie a real connection, and contagion, in which objects once in contact with something continued to influence the original item or person, even at a distance. Although many of Frazer's ideas have been rightly critiqued and discarded, the concept of sympathy continues to pervade many discussions of ritual activity. Recent treatments have nuanced this idea, instead focusing on the idea of the persuasive analogy, where persons and objects are wished into a state of congruence.[7] The idea of similarity, however, neither addresses the reasons why figurines are made, nor does it fully explain how similar features between objects affect change on the world through the mediation of the practitioner.

Mimetic representation seeks to reproduce a thing or person, permitting us to grasp (both physically and intellectually) that which is represented through its double.[8] Ideally, this replication would encompass every aspect of the original object, duplicating it in three-dimensional form or displaying it as a life-like, two-dimensional drawing or painting that would fool the eye. Mimesis collapses the distance between the object and the viewer, so that the individual making, touching, or observing the thing portrayed comprehends

6 J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Collier Books, 1985), 12, 14. The phrase *similia similibus* was used by Audollent to describe curse tablets that include the phrase, "Just as NN is similar to …" A.M.H. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1904), 491–92. cf. C.A. Faraone, "Hermes without the Marrow: Another Look at a Puzzling Magical Spell," *ZPE* 72 (1988): 279–86.

7 Compare S.J. Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View," in *Modes of Thought*, ed. R. Horton and R. Finnegan (London: Faber & Faber 1973), 67, citing G.E.R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 160.

8 W. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations,* ed. H. Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 223.

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it sensually.[9] This tactile and sensual experience of a thing is best achieved through the act of creation, as the artist or creator experiences the individual lines and shapes of that which is being portrayed; the completed object thus reflects the artist's understanding of the subject.[10] The congruencies between the object and the thing represented permits a slippage of boundaries; the representation becomes that which it represents. By determining the form and shape of the object that he or she has made, the artist also controls, though extension, its double, the victim of the spell.[11] This permits the practitioner to change reality, as he or she mimes a new reality into being through the copy.[12] The newly created artifact, which is believed to be able to act on the world, embodies the will of the practitioner, whose intention is responsible for whatever transpires through the mediating device of the object.[13]

What, then, does it mean to create a representation, and how faithful to the original must a representation be to achieve the desired effect? The representation is an extension of the identity of an original, one that lies under the control of the practitioner. Often the copy is smaller than the original, and only retains certain details. The choice of which features to include is significant, as each element that is included has been selected because of its ability to encapsulate the larger idea of the object or because a specific feature is important for the spell.[14] For anthropomorphic representations, sexual characteristics may be differentiated and highlighted.

Our perceptions of 'realism' or of mimetic faithfulness may not map onto the ancient mind. Pliny the Elder appears to value photorealistic representation in ancient painting, suggesting, for example, that one of the greatest Greek painters, Zeuxis, was able to fool the birds that attempted to eat the fruit he

9 M. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 35; W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 420–21.

10 M. Taussig, "What Do Drawings Want?," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 50 (2009): 269.

11 Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 113; A. Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford University Press 1998), 107.

12 Taussig, "What Do Drawings Want?," 271; Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, 30, 106–8.

13 Gell, *Art and Agency*, 18, 101; 122–124; D. Pels, K. Hetherington, and F. Vandenberghe, "The Status of the Object: Performances, Mediations, and Techniques," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 19 (2002): 8; B. Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical inquiry* 28 (2001): 1; C. Barrett, "Material Evidence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, ed. E. Eidinow and J. Kindt (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 123; R. Raja and L. Weiss, "The Significance of Objects: Considerations on Agency and Context," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 2 (2016): 298.

14 S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 44, 54.

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had painted. It is not possible, however, to evaluate this statement, as we lack the work that he discusses, and cannot be certain which features the ancient viewer would have been deemed realistic. Among the Yoruba people of West Africa, realistic and abstract portraits were used concurrently, sometimes on the same object. It seems likely that the realistic image represented the outer, visible features of an individual, while the abstract image presented a portrait of an individual's inner spirit.[15] An image may have been considered an accurate copy because of interior components, rather than external features. Minkisi figurines, produced by the BaKongo people of central Africa, suggest a different approach to our understanding of representation, as these powerful objects, which range from complex 'nail-fetishes' to simple cloth bags, often show little congruence between the created object and what the ancestral spirit it is supposed to represent. In the case of these artifacts, linkages are created through metaphor and metonymy, undertaken and reified through the will of the practitioner.[16]

The importance of the image often lies not in its appearance but rather its efficacy to the goals of the practitioner or ritual celebrant.[17] The ancients employed objects that were aniconic, neither theomorphic or anthropomorphic, to represent divinities or concepts. The Greeks, for example, employed unworked stones, poles, and empty spaces in cultic activities.[18] The union between representation and represented may only be conventional, established through the will of the practitioner. Images, decorative motifs, or other features may be added to raw materials or to objects that served other purposes creating an artifact that could be used in ritual. In the home, the representation of Zeus Ktisios, Zeus of Property, consisted of a two-handled lidded drinking cup, or *kadiskos*, that was adorned with white wool.[19] The addition of embellishment, such as spots, to animal bones could permit these organic remains to be transformed into representations of living or dead animals.[20] An association

15 H.J. Drewal, "Ife: Origins of Art and Civilization," in *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, ed. H.J. Drewal, J. Pemberton III, and R. Abiodun (New York: The Center for African Art, 1989), 63, and figures 70 and 71; S.P. Blier, "Art in Ancient Ife: Birthplace of the Yoruba," *African Arts* 45 (2012): 78–80.

16 W. MacGaffey, "The Eyes of Understanding: Kongo Minkisi," in *Astonishment and Power*, ed. W. MacGaffey et al. (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 84, 90–93.

17 E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Phaidon, 2002), 94.

18 M. Gaifman, *Aniconism in Greek Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 31–39.

19 Athenaus, *Deipnosophistae* 11.273b–c; Gaifman, *Aniconism in Greek Antiquity*, 125–128.

20 Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 143–145, 157; G. Brunton and G.M. Morant, *British Museum Expedition to Middle Egypt* (London: B. Quaritch, 1937), 131.

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between an object and a referent could also be established through writing or speech. The practitioner might inscribe the name of the target on the image, or, in the case of uninscribed figurines, he or she could pronounce the name of the victim.[21] At times, material (*ousia*, in Greek) such as hair, nails, or some other substance that had been in contact with the victim was attached to the figurine to cement the relationship.[22] The variety of representations that were employed in ritual practices is substantial, reinforcing the necessity of fully considering the context of a given image and its function within a rite.

2 Images from Pharaonic Egypt

In Egypt, *heka* drew on the power of the gods to accomplish personal or familial goals. Often, private rituals were nearly identical to those used in the temple, and only the performative context served as the point of distinction between temple ritual and private rites; both acts typically were performed by priests who made use of sacred texts from temples.[23] In the earliest periods of Egyptian history, religious enactments are most visible to modern scholars within the realm of royal or state rites; often, these rites appear in slightly modified form among the common people. The evidence for the place of figurines within Egyptian ritual practice can be established from a variety of sources, including religious rituals, spell texts, inscriptions and archaeological evidence. Within the public and private spheres, images and figurines played a significant role, often drawing the divinity to facilitate the performance of a spell or serving as a representation of an enemy within an execration rite.

Public rituals of execration were aimed largely at condemning and destroying the enemies of the king and state, but some evidence also suggests that these rites were adapted for private use. In the state rituals, clay vessels or figurines were associated with known individuals or groups of peoples either through inscriptions or by their physical poses, which bear close resemblance to bound prisoners, stylized figures depicted on many Egyptian artifacts from as early as the predynastic period (3300–3100 BCE). On the Palette of Narmer,

21 F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 139; Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," 190 and n. 90.

22 On the use of *ousia* in Greek binding tablets, see D.R. Jordan, "Defixiones from a Well near the Southwest Corner of the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 54 (1985): 251 and Eidinow, above, Chapter 15.

23 J. Assman, "Prayers, Hymns, Incantations and Curses: Egypt," in *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, ed. S.I. Johnston (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University 2004), 350–51.

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an artifact from Hierakonpolis that dates from Dynasty 0, the king is depicted grasping a bound captive by the hair and raising his scepter to deliver a death-blow (Illustration 18.2). This representation both commemorated the victory of the Egyptian king over his enemies and served to perpetuate that victory through ritual means—as the generalized image was engraved in permanent stone, so also would the king smite the enemies of Egypt in perpetuity.[24] The image of the king, striking a subservient captive, became a commonplace feature of Egyptian art, appearing on temple walls and in royal art (Illustration 18.3). In the depiction, the prisoner, who maintains ethnic features of one of the traditional enemies of Egypt (Libyans, Asiatics or Nubians) is shown on his knees, with arms and hands bound behind his back. Adopted for use within execration rites, this bound prisoner motif conveys the wish for domination and enslavement, as several the figurines clearly show their subjects with hands tied behind their backs.[25] Much like the smiting scene, the representation sought to convey that pose and its reality on the enemies of the king through ritualized transference.

Both figural and aniconic representations could serve comparable functions, sometimes in the same ritual context. During the reign of Pepi II (ca 2270–2205 BCE), four separate deposits of vessels and figurines were placed in larger ceramic vessels, each inscribed with the name of the king and buried in the main cemetery at Giza.[26] In one of the deposits, a substantial clay figurine was discovered in small fragments; it had originally been inscribed with a so-called "rebellion formula" which reads:

24 Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 113–19. On the Palette of Narmer, see J.E. Quibell, F.W. Green, and W.M.F. Petrie, *Hierakonpolis* (B. Quaritch 1900) pl. 29; J. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs* (Metropolitan Books 2002) 32–36. Earlier examples of the motif are discussed at Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 113–115, and n. 545.

25 Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 142–43; examples can be found in M. Heimer, "Une statuette d'envoûtement en albâtre du moyen empire," *Revue d'Égyptologie* 33 (1981): 134–37; G. Posener, *Cinq figurines d'envoûtement* (Cairo: IFAO, 1987), 7–10; G. Reisner, "New Acquisitions of the Egyptian Department," *MFA Bulletin* 11 (1913): 62; G. Posener, "Une nouvelle statuette d'envoûtement," in *Studien zu Sprache und Religion Ägyptens. Zu ehren von Wolfhart Westendorf überreicht von deinen Freunden und Schülern, Band I: Sprache*, (Göttingen: F. Jung, 1984), 613–19; H. Junker, *Giza VIII* (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1947), 32–34; A.M. Abu Bakr and J. Osing, "Ächtungstexte aus dem Alten Reich," *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 29 (1973): 98; J. Osing, "Ächtungstexte aus dem Alten Reich (II)," *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 32 (1976): 156, pl 51.

26 Junker, *Giza VIII*, 30–38; Abu Bakr and Osing, "Ächtungstexte aus dem alten Reich"; Osing, "Ächtungstexte aus dem alten Reich (II)." Regnal dates are from E. Hornung, *History of Ancient Egypt: An Introduction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

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ILLUSTRATION 18.2 The Palette of Narmer. Gray-green siltstone, Egypt, 1st Dynasty (3100–2890 BCE). Cairo Museum, *Journal d'Entrée* JE32169 = *Catalogue Général* number CG14716.
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ILLUSTRATION 18.3 Smiting scene from exterior wall of the mortuary temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, 12th century BCE
AUTHOR PHOTO

> [Every rebel of this land, all people, all patricians, all commoners, all males] all eunuchs, all women, every chieftain [every Nubian, every strongman, every messenger], every confederate, every ally of every land who will rebel in [a lengthy list of Egyptian place names], who will rebel or who will plot by saying plots or by speaking anything evil against Upper Egypt or Lower Egypt forever.[27]

The inscription associates the ceramic figurine with all the named individuals, encompassing both a traditional enemy of Egypt, the Nubians, as well as individuals or groups that could potentially rebel against the King. At the completion of the rite, the practitioner smashed and interred the figurine in the pottery vessel. Numerous other, smaller models, each inscribed with an Egyptian or Nubian name, as well as a single, uninscribed but broken statuette were also placed in the vessel. The rite is a pre-emptive strike, as it is specifically aimed at those individuals who "will rebel or who will plot by saying plots,"

27 Translation from Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 139.

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rather than specifying a condition upon which the execration will be triggered. The rite included both a written curse, as well as models of the victims. The ritual enactment operated on a one-to-many relationship, where the destruction of a single image was intended to incapacitate or destroy multiple targets. Each of the smaller statuettes, on the other hand, was personalized, and would have had a one-to-one relationship with an individual, specific target. Finally, the uninscribed figurine is a catch-all, a figure that could be associated with a yet unknown threat. By enclosing the fragments of the statuettes in the vessel and subsequently burying this jar in a cemetery, the ritual specialist cordoned off threats to the king or his reign by isolating the representations of that threat, and further associated the victims of the spell with the mortuary realm and death.[28]

Middle Kingdom examples are likewise aimed at Libyans, Nubians and Asiatics, all traditional enemies of the Egyptian king and state. One of the best preserved and archaeologically complete deposits of execration figurines and texts is associated with the military fortress at Mirgissa, constructed in the XII dynasty, perhaps during the reign of Sesostris II (1845–1837 BCE), which served as a bulwark against the Nubian peoples to the south of Egypt.[29] The deposit, which consisted of three separate pits, included 197 inscribed red ceramic vessels, 437 uninscribed red vessels, 346 mud figurines, 3 figurines in limestone, the head of a fourth figurine, and the remains of a human ritual killing.[30] The bulk of the deposit was placed within a large pit hollowed out in the sand, well away from patterns of movement on the site. The ceramic vessels were shattered prior to being placed in the pit, and approximately one-third of the vessels had been inscribed with the names of enemies of the Egyptian state.[31] The fragments of inscribed and uninscribed pots were regularly interspersed with seven layers of mud figurines, with each layer including a specific corpus of items: a headless and bound torso, a severed head or foot, a blinded eye, six

28 Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 172–73. The three other execration deposits from Giza were all quite different, but were aimed at similar goals.

29 An inscription of Sesostris III (1837–1818 BCE) from Semna records that the outposts were built "to prevent any Nubian from passing it downstream or overland or by boat, (also) any herds of Nubians." Translation S.A.H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 135.

30 A. Vila, "Un dépôt de textes d'envoûtement au moyen empire," *Journal des savants* 3 (1963): 135–60; for a full discussion, see Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 153–80.

31 This likely is related to the ritual of the "Breaking of the Red Pots" found in the Pyramid Text 244; see J. van Dijk, "Zerbrechen der roten Töpfe," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* 6 (1986): 1389–96; K. Muhlestein, "'Execration Ritual'," in *The UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, vol. 1(1) (UCLA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, 2008).

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or seven models of reed boats, a domesticated animal, a reptile, twelve geese in flight and a number of unidentified objects. The human figures or body-parts clearly represent the Nubians, whom the rite intended to kill or otherwise destroy; the rite also intended the destruction of their herds (the domesticated animals) and means of transport (the boats). The reptile and the geese likely stood for the traditional divine enemies of Egypt, residents of the desert.[32] A second deposit was placed eleven meters away from the first, and included the statuettes of three bound prisoners and the head of a fourth.[33] A third deposit consisted of the head of a Nubian victim, killed as part of the ritual, and buried in the ground on top of a pottery vessel. Around the skull, the excavators discovered traces of red beeswax, presumably the remains of wax figurines that were melted in the performance of the rite.[34] The decapitated body of the Nubian was found a short distance away, offering clear evidence that this individual was executed as part of the process.

The execration rite was intended to protect the fort—and Egypt—from Nubian incursions, and at each stage of the ritual, figurines (made of clay or wax) or red bowls were damaged or destroyed. These images represent threats of the Egyptian state, and the practitioner transferred destruction onto the human and demonic enemies of Egypt by breaking and melting, and subsequently burying the figurines to remove the images, and their referents, from the world. The direct relationship between image and antecedent was less important than the fact that artifact and counterpart were associated as part of the ritual—ceramic vessels could represent human enemies and even uninscribed vases could stand in for unknown or unspecified threats to the rule of the king. Like the execration figurines from the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom examples would represent either specific, single enemies or a larger, corporate group. This is particularly evident in the four limestone figurines that employ the bound prisoner motif, each of which correlated to one of the four cardinal directions: all the figurines were abused, likely to direct destruction on groups of peoples. Perhaps the most significant and barbaric instance of this transference lies in the ritual killing of the human being, whose head served as a representation of all Nubians and extended the destruction of a

32 Ritner notes that these chaotic forces would have threatened Egypt by means of foreign enemies. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 160 and n. 743.

33 A. Vila, "Un rituel d'envoûtement au Moyen Empire égyptien," in *L'homme, hier et aujourd'hui: Recueil d'études en hommage à André Leroi-Gourhan*, ed. A. Leroi-Gourhan (Paris: Cujas, 1973), 631; Vila, "Un dépôt de textes d'envoûtement au Moyen Empire," 147. See discussion at Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 162 and 158.

34 Vila, "Un rituel d'envoûtement au Moyen Empire égyptien," 631, n. 15.

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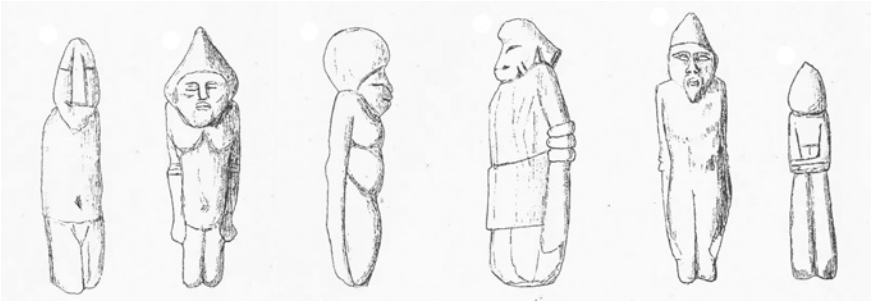

ILLUSTRATION 18.4 Limestone figurines from site of Tanis, image from W.M.F. Petrie and F.L. Griffith, *Tanis* (London, Trubner & Co., 1888), 73.

single individual to an entire people.[35] This deposit was clearly aimed at protection through the total eradication of the king's enemies. Furthermore, its location was critical to its efficacy, as these rituals were enacted at a border fort, a place crucial to ensuring the continuance of Egyptian power.

Practices like the execration rites demonstrated in the Mirgissa deposit continue through the New Kingdom and well into the Late Period. For example, in the Apophis Book of the New Kingdom Bremner-Rhind papyrus, the practitioner is given instructions for performing an execration of Apophis, a divinity who was viewed as the enemy of Re, the sun-god.[36] Wax figurines of the god are melted along with the enemies of the pharaoh. The practitioner is invited to list also his own personal enemies: "inscribe for yourself these names of all male and female enemies whom your heart fears as every enemy of pharaoh whether dead or alive."[37] This papyrus was used as a private funerary document, demonstrating the intersection between public and private rites. The practice of execration can be traced well into the Saite period, and Petrie records the discovery of limestone figurines at the site of Tanis. The figurines are roughly carved, and appear like pegs, with their legs bent at the knees and their arms bound (Illustration 18.4). More than thirty examples were discovered, many of which had been broken, presumably as part of the rite.[38]

35 Ritner further suggests that this human ritual killing and burial created a cemetery at the fortress, as such a place of deposition was a necessary component of the execration.

36 R.O. Faulkner, *The Papyrus Bremner-Rhind* (*British Museum No. 10188*) (Brussels: Édition de la fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1933), 68–69 (col. 28/16–18), discussed at Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 184.

37 Translation Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 184.

38 W.M.F. Petrie and F.L. Griffith, *Tanis* (London: Trubner & Co., 1888), 73, with discussion at Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 154.

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In addition to the range of figural representations associated with execration, other images were employed in rites related to fertility, protection, or health. Several roughly-made figurines, created out of materials such as wood, stone, clay, ivory, and faience, have been discovered in shrines to the goddess Hathor, domestic contexts, and graves (Illustration 18.5). These objects are identifiable as female through the presence of a pubic triangle. Some are shown with infants, while others are depicted with beds. The association with sanctuaries to Hathor suggests that the representations, which appear to emphasize female fertility, may have been dedicated to the goddess in the hope of ensuring pregnancy.[39] Comparable figurines also were employed in the home, where proximity to intercourse may have been believed to encourage conception. Several of the figurines were broken, perhaps because they were no longer needed. The appearance of similar figurines in male graves may point to a different use: ensuring male sexual virility in the next world.[40]

Images of divinities could play an important role in private ritual acts by invoking and inviting the participation of the god. Divinities were called upon to assist in private rituals, particularly when individuals were forced to undergo a difficult task or were in medical danger. So, for example, during the Middle Kingdom, apotropaic wands (or knives) were inscribed with images of divinities such as Bes and Taweret that were invoked to protect new mothers.[41] A similar purpose can be associated with images of the god Horus/Harpocrates standing on a pair of crocodiles that are featured on stone cippi, known from the eighteenth dynasty down to the Roman period (Illustration 18.6).[42] The texts written on the stelae indicate that they were used for protection and healing; the patient was likened to the god and healed through association with the divinity. Typically, suppliants would pour water over the stele, or submerge

39 G. Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1993), 211–25; R. Janssen and J.J. Janssen, *Growing up in Ancient Egypt* (London: Rubicon, 1990), 7–8; R.K. Ritner, "Household Religion in Ancient Egypt," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. J. Bodel and S.M. Olyan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 181–82.

40 R.K. Ritner, "Des preuves de l'existence d'une nécromancie dans l'égypte ancienne, in *La magie en Égypte: À la recherche d'une définition: Actes du colloque organisé par le Musée du Louvre, les 29 et 30 septembre 2000*, ed. Y. Koenig (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2002), 291–92.

41 H. Altenmüller, "Apotropaikon," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* 1 (1975): 355–58.

42 Catalogs: H. Sternberg-El Hotabi, *Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Horusstelen: Ein Beitrag zur Religionsgeschichte Ägyptens im 1. Jahrtausend V. Chr* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999); A. Gasse and C. Ziegler, *Les stèles d'Horus sur les crocodiles* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux 2004); L. Kákosy, *Egyptian Healing Statues in Three Museums in Italy: Turin, Florence, Naples* (Torino: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Soprintendenza al Museo delle antichità egizie, 1999).

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ILLUSTRATION 18.5 Figurine of a nude female with the face of Hathor wearing headdress and carrying a kerchief, from the Temple of Hathor at Faras, Sudan (Nubia). Pottery. 18th Dynasty. British Museum EA51263.
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ILLUSTRATION 18.6 Black steatite cippus; Harpocrates holds snakes, scorpions and lions by the tails; head of Bes at the top; Hieroglyphic text on the face, around the edge and on the back in fifteen rows. British Museum EA 1899,0708.23.
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

smaller examples in basins, and subsequently drink the empowered liquid.[43] Where execration forcibly connects the enemy to the image and subsequently destroys its victim, the Horus cippi provide a means for the individual to assume the likeness of the god for a positive result, and the suppliant, rather

43 R.K. Ritner, "Horus on the Crocodiles: A Juncture of Religion and Magic," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. W.K. Simpson (New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1989), 105–107. On drinking the words of spells to activate them, see Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 102–11; Kákosy, *Egyptian Healing Statues in Three Museums in Italy*, 16–17.

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than the creator of the image, is able to employ a representation for his or her own use.

3 Images in the Near East

Images of divinities and other composite spirits appear frequently in foundation deposits and on the exterior of buildings, representations that are discussed below (Wilburn, Chapter 20). Although few examples have been discovered, written sources indicate that images of humans, ghosts, or spirits commonly were used for a variety of purposes: to deflect witchcraft, heal sickness, appease the angry spirits of ghosts, and invoke conditional curses. The sources, most of which date from the first half of the first millennium BCE, record traditions that reference much earlier practices.[44] The ritual manuals include complex spells, and most of the rites were performed by one of two ritual specialists: the *āšipu* (exorcist) or the *asû* (physician). The roles of these two individuals often overlapped, but in much of the literature, the exorcist was associated with demonic forces and likely worked in association with the temple.[45] The rituals described within the texts were performed on behalf of private individuals, albeit largely members of the upper classes.[46]

Some of the earliest texts from Mesopotamia contain prescriptions intended to deflect and counteract witchcraft, often through the destruction of images or representations of the target, a process that appears similar to Egyptian rituals of execration.[47] The Maqlû, or "Burning", which was created and performed for royalty in order to protect the king from malign ritual attacks by 'witches,' was composed over an extended period of time and is preserved in multiple

44 The most important corpora include a seventh century BCE archive of spell texts from a family of exorcists at Aššur, Assurbanipal's library at Nineveh, and group of documents from a religious school in Sultantepe. M.-L. Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Biblical and Pagan Societies*, ed. B. Ankarloo, S. Clark, and S. Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 17–18.

45 J. Scurlock, "Physician, Exorcist, Conjurer, Magician: A Tale of Two Healing Professionals," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical and Interpretive Perpectives*, ed. T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn (Leiden: Styx, 1999), 78–79.

46 T. Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* (Leiden: Styx, 2002), 5, and see above, Schwemer, Chapter 4.

47 Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 50. Witchcraft was illegal in many of the Mesopotamian regimes, and is circumscribed in the law code of Hammurapi (18th century BCE) as well as Middle Assyrian Law; the same, 25–26.

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tablets in both Babylonian and Akkadian; the preserved form likely dates from the first millennium BCE.[48] Among more than a hundred incantations and prayers, figurines played important roles and were made of various materials, including tallow, clay, wax, dough, bitumen, and wood. Much like the uninscribed figurines used in Egyptian execration, the image could represent a witch without knowing his or her identity, and there are few indications that the physical form of the statuette was specialized beyond a general anthropomorphism. At numerous points in the rite, a figurine or multiple figurines were presented to the divinity, judgment was pronounced against the figurines, and they were somehow destroyed or banished. The first tablet states:

> I have made an image of my warlock and my witch
> Of my conjurer and sorceress
> I have set it at your feet and plead my case:
> Because evil did she perform against me and baseless charges has she conjured up against me,
> May she die, but I live!
> Verily are her bewitchments, enchantments, and charms released![49]

Later in the ritual sequence, a figurine is imprinted with a cylinder seal and a group of figurines is put in a boat and set afloat on a river. Sealing the figurine may have been intended to prevent the target from taking some action, or the seal could have been used to specify the offending party. Accurately identifying the victim is important, as the specialist declares "may she die, but I live," a phrase that is clearly intended to differentiate the target of the spell from the one intoning the rite. Furthermore, by placing the representations in a boat and sending them downriver, the offending individual would be expelled from the community and sent into the wild. Many of the ritual sequences end with a request that the god addressed in the incantation, Nusku, destroy the figurines (and thus the witch) by fire.[50] The rites manipulate the figurines in multiple ways, sealing or binding the images to prevent some action, banishing the representation and sending it out of the community, and finally, destroying the image totally, presumably to negate and obliterate the witch and his or her power.

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48 Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 287–88. In general, on the form and purpose of the Maqlû, see T. Abusch, "Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature: Texts and Studies Part I: The Nature of Maqlû: Its Character, Divisions, and Calendrical Setting," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33 (1974): 251–62.

49 Trans. Abusch, "Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature," xi.

50 Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 51–52.

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The fear of witchcraft seems to have been a serious concern for the Assyrian rulers and the populace, even though only a single recorded trial of a witch is preserved.[51] The rite is performed as a defense against witchcraft, but the use of figurines, spells, and other ritualized actions are similar to the acts imputed to the witch Maqlû V 5–7 states "May the evil magic you practiced be against yourself, may the figurines you made represent yourself."[52] Witchcraft was differentiated from acceptable ritual actions solely by its purpose, and the determination of legitimacy was dependent on the observer.[53] In the Mesopotamian context, as elsewhere, a representation could be malleable, and it was necessary to ensure that the target of the spell was adequately differentiated from the practitioner.

Many of the ritual procedures used as a defense against witchcraft were mirrored in healing rites, especially those aimed at appeasing angry ghosts. The spirits of those who had died violently, either through warfare, murder, drowning, or burning, tormented their victims, often attacked a specific body part and caused pain or illness.[54] So, an Akkadian text states "if a person's right temple hurts him and his right eye is swollen and sheds tears, 'hand' of ghost, and deputy of Ishtar."[55] Illnesses were believed to be caused by afflicting ghosts and demons, and while some treatment for ailments such as these could involve the application of poultices or the administration of herbs and potions, in others, the ritual specialist is instructed to mold a figurine and use

51 Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 23.

52 Trans. Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 47. Similar rituals are attested among the Hittites, so the ritual of Tunnawi also manipulates and burns clay, wax and tallow figurines to banish witchcraft. See A. Goetze, *The Hittite Ritual of Tunnawi* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1938), esp. 2.8–2.14, pp. 12–13, with commentary, and D.H. Engelhard, "Hittite Magical Practices: An Analysis," (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1970), 175–76.

53 Kindt, *Rethinking Greek Religion*, 115; J.Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenic and Roman Antiquity," in *ANRW* II.16.1, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978), 429.

54 J.A. Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Leiden: Styx, 2006), 5, with references to precise spell texts. On illness in Mesopotamia, see J. Scurlock and B. Andersen, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian Medicine: Ancient Sources, Translations, and Modern Medical Analyses* (Urbana, IL and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

55 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, 293, no. 79 = F. Köcher, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963) no. 482. Similarly, R. Labat, *Traite akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux* (Paris: Academie internationale d'histoire des sciences, 1951), 36: 31–32. Ghost-induced illness could take many forms. Among others, see the following in Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, intestinal pain: no. 199; dizziness: nos 88–89; confusion: 521–523, no. 221; wasting away: 536, no. 227.

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it within the rite. For example, when a living individual is tormented by a dead person, the text instructs the practitioner as follows:

> For three days you purify the potter's pit. On the fourth day, at night, you pinch off clay. You make a figurine of that ghost. You write its name on its left shoulder. You twist its feet. You put its [...] down on it. You stick a straight tooth from a dog in its mouth.[56]

An inscription links the figurine to the tormenting ghost. The inscription likely read "the spirit tormenting NN," where NN was the name of the victim, allowing the practitioner to avoid the dangerous mistake of blaming the wrong spirit.[57] The actions undertaken with the image were intended to incapacitate the malign ghoul: by twisting its feet, the ghost would be prevented from moving, and the tooth, placed in its mouth, would have prevented it from speaking. Through these gestures the figurine promises the god Šamaš that he will not reappear, and the image is buried within a hole (l. 8–11). This final portion of the rite implicates the dead spirit in an oath with the divinity of the dead and displaces the ghost—again through the medium of the figurine—from its victim.

Many tormenting spirits were angry because of absent or insufficient funerary offerings. Propitiating rituals involve providing the figurine with food or drink, such as barley or beer, over the course of a few days. Following this ritual meal, the figurine could be placed in a makeshift coffin—often a ceramic vessel or a copper cup, and then buried.[58] These trappings, however, overlay the real intent of the ritual: to rid the victim or community of the ghostly presence. The figurine may be addressed directly and told to depart, or, as is the case in one example, set on a miniature reed boat and sent downriver.[59] This last spell is suggestive of the Maqlû rite, and treats the spirit of the ghost in the same manner as the witch, by forcibly banishing the image, and therefore the ghost, from the community. The image is not destroyed, but rather, is removed.

In some ghost rituals, multiple figurines were used to represent both victim and afflicting ghost. In one rite, the practitioner buries the figurine of the ghost and washes the figurine of the sick individual in water; the patient also washes himself.[60] Both patient and figurine undertake the same action

56 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, 207, no. 14.

57 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, 49.

58 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, 50. On offerings, see nos. 12, 13, 220, 225, 226, 230. On burial, see nos. 11, 218, 226, 230.

59 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, no. 221.

60 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, no. 11; cf. nos. 15, 228, 232.

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to achieve a desired result: healing. Alternatively, the figurine could be personified and treated as a separate entity with individual agency. Another spell instructs the practitioner to make a figurine of a woman out of reeds, dress it in clothing, provide it with a dowry of a bed frame and chair, and finally to give the image to the ghost as a wife. The practitioner intones

> Little dwarf, you have been completely fitted out. As the substitute and in the stead of NN, son of NN, you have been given. The evi[l confusional stat]e (causing ghost or) *mukul rēš lemutti*-demon [which] was set [on] NN son of NN-he is your husband. You are given to him (as wife). You may take him fr[om the bo]dy of NN son of NN and go away."[61]

Like some of the other ghost rituals, the spirit is expected to depart, but in this case, the figurine plays an active role and entices the ghost. In this and in other rites, images could be viewed as representations that possessed agency—figurines could be satisfied by appropriate burial rites or choose to depart at the urging of the practitioner.

In most of the healing spells, the instructions for the creation of figurines requires that the practitioner make the statuettes from clay, but in several prescriptions other materials were used, including wax, tallow, flour or straw.[62] These figurines were roughly anthropomorphic, at times differentiating the sex of the represented ghost. Pairs of figurines could be created to represent both male and female ghosts, ensuring that the sex of the malign spirit was appropriately depicted. Typically, the images were intended to represent ghosts or a dead person, but some figurines could also be depictions of the illness. In each case, it seems that an anthropomorphic form was appropriate.[63] Few details are provided about the modelling or appearance of the images, most likely because the practitioner was not aware of the identity of the deceased individual. The association between the figurine and ghost was conceptual, where visual similarity appears to have been unimportant.

Representations also could facilitate erotic affection between the practitioner and target, but the conceptualization of how the ritual function differs dramatically. In one set of instructions, the practitioner is instructed first to invoke the goddess Ianna to induce the affections of a potential lover, and then, if that fails, to give an enchanted apple or pomegranate to her. If these

61 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, no. 220.

62 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*: wax: no. 10, 119, 219; ox blood: 226; flour and horse urine: 218; straw: 230.

63 Scurlock, *Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, no. 221.

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methods also fail, the practitioner must create a figurine of the woman and inscribe her name on the image's hip. The figurine is then buried beneath a gate of the city. Once the woman has walked over the image, the spell states "the incantation 'The beautiful woman' you recite three times; that woman will come to you (and) you can make love to her."[64] In this rite, it is not sufficient to associate the image with the target; the victim must also encounter the figurine for the spell to be effective. What is striking in this case, however, is that the treatment of the figurine—burying it beneath the gate of the city—does not cause a comparable effect on the woman. Rather, contact serves to bring the victim under the control of the practitioner. Spells such as this provide good reason for the residents of Mesopotamia to fear that they or a family member had been bewitched.

Figurines were not limited to depictions of witches, ghosts, demons and other malign forces, but also represented the human participants in ritualized agreements between kings and other potentates. In the so-called Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon, the subjects of the king engage in a self-curse, asking the gods to destroy those who violate the treaty, "just as one burns a wax figure in fire, dissolves a clay one in water."[65] A similar self-imprecation is present in the so-called Sefire Inscription, an earlier, mid-eighth century Aramaic text discovered near Aleppo. This text, which records a treaty between the kings Barga'yah and Matti'el, refers to a wax figurine that will hold Matti'el to the agreement: as the text reads, "As this wax is consumed by fire, thus Ma [tti'el] shall be consumed b[y fi]re."[66] The process of melting the wax figurines is not intended immediately to affect their human counterparts. Rather, the spell would be triggered only if the participants in the oath were to violate the terms of the contract. Vengeance is delayed, perhaps indefinitely, depending on the actions of the participants. Both texts record public, official ceremonies undertaken by potentates and their subjects, but these documents clearly demonstrate that many of the same ritual principles that linked figurines to ghosts or witches could also be applied to human actors. Such ceremonies

64 R.D. Biggs and E. Ebeling, *šà.zi.ga. Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations* (Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin 1967), 70–71.

65 Translation J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 540. In general, see D.J. Wiseman, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon," *Iraq* 20 (1958): 534–40; S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), 28–58.

66 Translation Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 660; C.A. Faraone, "Molten Wax, Spilt Wine, and Mutilated Animals: Sympathetic Magic in near Eastern and Early Greek Oath Ceremonies," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113 (1993): 63.

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that involve burning or melting figurines are closely related to Greek rites that appear two and three centuries later.

4 Figurines and Images in the Greek World

Literary and epigraphic evidence suggests that figurines were used in the Greek world for ritual practice from at least the sixth or fifth century BCE. Even at this early date, there appears to have been no single cultural niche that was occupied by the figurines, and even in the same local setting, such as Cyrene, representations were employed for a multiplicity of uses. The rites of the Greek speaking world envisioned the role of the image differently: as a stand-in for the participants in the ritual, as a vessel for the spirit of the deceased, and as a representation of the victim of a spell.

A fourth-century BCE copy of the sixth century decree from Cyrene in Libya purports to record the oath taken by the colonists from Thera who settled at Cyrene in the seventh century BCE.[67] The agreement stipulated that one son should be sent from Thera to form part of the new colony and provided penalties for those free citizens who failed to obey. According to the text, as part of the oath ceremony, the colonists "moulded wax images (*tos kolossos*) and burnt them while they uttered the following imprecation, all of them, men and women, boys and girls: 'May he who does not abide by this agreement by transgresses it melt away and dissolve like the images, himself, his seed, and his property'."[68] The manipulation of wax images imposed ritual penalties should the adherents violate the tenets of the treaty; like the wax dolls, the oath-breakers would be destroyed. The foundation decree demonstrates clear similarities with oaths from the Near East and the Levant, especially the eighth century Sefire decree, discussed above.[69] By melting the wax figurines, the participants in the oath took part in a self-imposed curse that would be enacted should they violate the terms of the agreement. This ritual was a public rite, and all the new colonists of Cyrene and Thera took part as co-signatories, but the basic concepts underlying the rite and its use of figurines were translated into the private sphere.

67 R. Meiggs and D.M. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 5–9, no. 5; cf. Herodotus iv, 145–159.

68 Translation A.J. Graham, *Colony and Mother City in Ancient Greece* (Chicago: Ares, 1983), 226.

69 Faraone, "Molten Wax, Spilt Wine, and Mutilated Animals," esp. 60–65.

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Cyrene provides another important inscription that details the use of figurines in a series of public and private rites intended to appease troublesome demons or ghosts—named as a "visitant" (*hikesios epaktos*).[70] Like the foundation decree, many of the features of this ghost-laying ritual resonate with Near Eastern rites. The inscription collects procedures for use in a variety of circumstances, and provides three separate scenarios for private citizens who are troubled by unwelcome spirits. If the individual who sent the visitant (presumably through an aggressive ritual) is known, the ghost could be banished by proclaiming his or her name for three days. Similarly, if the visitant is dead, he or she could be removed through this selfsame proclamation. The third instance, however, provides a sharp deviation. The inscription relates that:

> But if [in either case?] he does not know his name [he shall address him]: "O human being (*anthropos*) whether you are a man or woman," and having made male and female figurines (*kolossoi*) either from wood or earth he shall entertain them and set beside them a portion of everything. When you have done the customary things, take the figurines (*kolossoi*) and [their] portions and deposit them in an unworked glen.[71]

In both inscriptions, the word *kolossos* (plural *kolossoi*) is used to describe the representation of a human figure.[72] The *kolossoi* could be made of wax, stone, or clay, and that the figurines were fashioned as representations of humans, with, at the minimum, sexual characteristics. By emulating mortuary rites, the ritual attempts to appease a hostile spirit that may have been directed against the victim.[73] The figurines are offered a meal and subsequently removed from

70 *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (SEG), 9.72.111–121. For translation and commentary, see R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford University Press 1983), 347. On the term *hikesios*, see note in C.A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 91, n. 60.

71 This translation is adapted from Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, 82.

72 In later Greek tradition, however, this word is used for large sculptures, such as the famed Colossus of Rhodes. One solution for this problem has been to propose different meanings for the two words in various time periods, and in particular, to see the kolossoi of the Cyrene inscriptions as minimized "doubles" for their human counterparts. On the word Kolossos, see É. Benveniste, "Le sens du mot Kolossos et les noms grecs de la statue," *Revue de philologie* 58 (1932): 118–35; C. Picard, "Le rite magique des Ειδολα de cire brules, attesté sur trois steles arameennes de Sfire," *Revue archéologique* 2 (1961): 85–87; M.W. Dickie, "What Is a Kolossos and How Were Kolossoi Made in the Hellenistic Period?," *GRBS* 37 (1996): 237–57.

73 Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, 82; W. Burkert, *Die orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1984), 68–71.

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the community. The text of the inscription at this point is imprecise, and may have directed the practitioner to deposit the artifacts in the ground or merely place them in the grove, but in both instances, the removal of the figurines to an uninhabited region separated the attacking ghost from the settlement.[74] The figurines employed in the Cyrene ghost-laying rites, like their counterparts from Mesopotamia, were created without a clear prototype; the images did not represent specific spirits, but instead reproduced an unknown spirit. The images were anthropomorphic, and sexual differentiation was intended to accommodate both male and female ghosts. Spirits could be angry or hostile for a variety of reasons, most often—at least in our earliest sources—because of improper burial rites.[75] The rituals undertaken here, offering the statuettes food, mimed funerary rites, complete with food offerings.

Archaeological evidence suggests that figurines were used most often in binding rites. In Greece, binding was associated with immortals, who were restrained since they could not be killed. Greek tradition suggests that statues of divinities could be publicly bound to counteract both natural and human threats; for example, the first century CE residents of Syedra, in Asia Minor, bound a statue of Ares to restrain pirates that were terrorizing the Pamphylian coast.[76] This concept appears to have been transferred to human targets, where ritual binding could prevent a victim from performing some action. Images are often shown in bonds or with hands, feet or heads twisted around, physically miming the result that the practitioner intends through the rite. Faraone has associated two early, uninscribed figurines with binding, including a 7th century cast bronze statuette from Tegea and an archaic figurine from Sime on Cephalonia.[77] The Tegea artifact has its hands clasped or bound together above its head, while the figurine from Sime is depicted with its hands and feet twisted towards its buttocks. A clearer connection with ritual binding can be proposed for five archaic- or Hellenistic-period figurines from Alonistena,

74 Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," 82.

75 Homer, *Odyssey*, 11 51–83; see S.I. Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), *passim*, esp. 9–10. 58–61.

76 Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," 168–9.

77 Tegea: Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 8; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antiquarium inv. no. 6405; W. Lamb, "Arcadian Bronze Statuettes," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 27 (1925): 133–34; K.A. Neugebauer, *Katalog der statuarischen Bronzen im Antiquarium* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1931), 66–67; no. 163. Sime: Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 10; H.B. Walters and A. Roman, *Catalogue of the Bronzes, Greek, Roman, and Etruscan* (London: Trustuees of the British Museum, 1899); C.Q. Giglioli, "Curiosità archeologiche," *Studi etruschi* 3 (1929): 529–30; Neugebauer, *Katalog der statuarischen Bronzen im Antiquarium*, 66.

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ILLUSTRATION 18.7 Five bronze figurines from Alonistena in Arcadia. Archaic (Nauegebauer) or Hellenistic period (Faraone). Athens NAM inv.no. X 15130/1-5. The representations depict human figures whose hands and feet have been restrained with a band.
NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, ATHENS (PHOTOGRAPHER TASSOS VRETTOS) COPYRIGHT © HELLENIC MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS / ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECEIPTS FUND

each of which is small in size, measuring between four and six centimeters in height (Illustration 18.7).[78] The legs and feet of the figurines have been placed together, and a thick metal band encircles the ankles. The hands are twisted behind the back and again bound with a band. The head of one figurine is twisted fully around to face backwards and the heads of each of the others are turned at an unnatural angle of more than ninety degrees. One of the figurines has roughly-shaped male genitals but no sex has been indicated for any of the other statuettes.

The appearance of each of these figurines emphasizes twisting and turning through the dislocation of heads and appendages. The positioning of different parts of the body may have been intended to confuse or otherwise disable the human counterpart of the image.[79] Restraint, aimed at the prevention of

78 Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 9. Athens Nat. Mus. Inv. no. 15130; Neugebauer, *Katalog der statuarischen Bronzen im Antiquarium*, 67 n. 2.

79 Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," 194.

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some act, is conveyed through the bonds that encircle the hands and feet of the images. As noted above, the depiction of bound or captive prisoners in Egypt was intended to subjugate the victim to the king, while Near Eastern ghost-laying rituals employed figurines of malign spirits bound in chains, with the goal of preventing them from tormenting their victims. In these examples from the Greek world, the practitioner intends to remove agency from the victim through confusion or contortion, and to prevent an action through physical restraint but does not envision their total annihilation.

The physical intent of the binding figurines—confusion and restraint—can be compared to contemporary ritual practices involving binding tablets, discussed by Eidinow (above, Chapter 15). Like the figurines, binding tablets may rely on the motif of twisting or turning to prevent the victim from doing some action that is occasionally mentioned in the text. The binding tablets are perceived to 'work' through multiple mechanisms, which are not mutually exclusive. Many tablets were inscribed with names only, suggesting that the sheets of lead were meant to represent the victim metaphorically; the tablets were linked to their antecedents through the presence of a name or multiple names. The text could be written backwards, or distorted in some way, a phenomenon that Gordon has termed 'pseudo-paragraphia.'[80] It is likely that the individual inscribing the text intended the victim to be confused or turned about, like the text. The lead sheets could be rolled or folded, miming the twisting and turning apparent in the figurines. Many tablets were pierced with nails, which would have secured and retrained the victim.[81]

The link between binding curses on lead sheets and the figurines can be seen in several deposits from Athens that included both tablets and a figural representation. A grave discovered in the Kerameikos cemetery contained a roughly made lead figurine. The figurine has exaggerated genitals, which emphasize its sex (male); its hands have been turned and twisted behind its back as if bound (Illustration 18.8).[82] The name Mnesimachos has been inscribed on its right leg. This figurine was discovered inside a small box formed by two sheets of lead; the interior of the upper sheet was inscribed with a series of names,

80 C.A. Faraone and A. Kropp, "Inversion, Adversion and Perversion as Strategies in Latin Curse-Tablets," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, ed. R.L. Gordon and F. Marco Simón, *RGRW* 168 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 381–98; R.L. Gordon, "Showing the Gods the Way: Curse Tablets as Deictic Persuasion," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1 (2015): 165–72.

81 Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*, 149. Gordon, "Showing the Gods the Way," 158–60.

82 J. Trumpf, "Fluchtafel und Rachepuppe," *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts* 73 (1958): pls. 71.3–4, 72.1–2; J.B. Curbera and D.R. Jordan, "A Curse Tablet from the 'Industrial District' near the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 67.2 (1998): 215–18; Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 5.

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ILLUSTRATION 18.8 Figurine inscribed with the name "Mnesimachos" and placed within an enclosure made of binding tablets, from the Kerameikos cemetery, Athens. Lead. 4th century BCE.
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including Mnesimachos. A nearby grave, contemporary in date, contained a further three figurines, each of which was enclosed within a lead box comprised of multiple folded or bent sheets. Like the single example, names were inscribed on the lead boxes and two of the figurines were bound and inscribed with names.[83] The shape of the tablets—with curved sides to form a cylinder or with hinges to create a door—suggest that practitioner intended the tablets to represent an enclosure or even a small coffin.[84] This appearance reflects the grave in which the figurines were deposited, and the rite was meant to invoke

83 The earliest tablets are associated with judicial cases, and the names listed both on the figurines and the caskets in which they were buried suggest a similar function for these ritual objects. Curbera and Jordan, "A Curse Tablet from the 'Industrial District'"; *CTBS*, no. 41.

84 G. Németh, *Supplementum Audollentianum* (Budapest: University of Debrecen, 2013) 79–80.

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a double burial. The figurines may have drawn upon the power of the untimely dead—typically individuals killed by violence, and young, unwed men and women—who were believed to restlessly wander the earth.[85] Like the rites associated with Assyrian ghost-induced sickness and in Egyptian execration rites, figurines were often buried to remove forcibly their human or supernatural antecedent from society, either through banishment or utter destruction.

The Kerameikos figurines, like those from Alonistea, are crude representations of human figures. The heads of the figurines are barely differentiated from the bodies and lack distinguishing features, such as eyes, ears or hair. The torsos are shortened, and the focus appears to be on the arms and legs, which are, at least in the case of the figurine inscribed with the name Mnesimachos, elongated for emphasis. These appendages are often turned or twisted behind the body to indicate binding. Several of the figurines have exaggerated genitals, clearly marking their human counterparts as male.[86] These figurines were used in tandem with the inscribed lead sheets, and although they were associated with specific individuals through inscriptions, may have served as representations of multiple human counterparts, much as the wax figurines from the Cyrene foundation decree or the large execration figures used in the Egyptian Mirgissa deposit were correlated to multiple antecedents.

Binding figurines have been discovered in a variety of archaeological contexts, suggesting that deposition played an important role in the enactment of the ritual. The philosopher Plato, condemning popular beliefs in the fourth century BCE, notes the locations commonly associated with figurines. He laments that

> it is futile to approach the souls of men who view one another with dark suspicion if they happen to see images of moulded wax at doorways, or at points where three ways meet or it may be at the tomb of some ancestor, to bid them make light of all such portents, when we ourselves hold no clear opinion concerning them.[87]

85 These individuals were considered "restless." (Pl. *Phd.* 81cd; Hippoc. 1.38). cf. Johnston *Restless Dead*; D. Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. by B. Ankarloo and S. Clark (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 16.

86 It is not certain whether the exaggerated genitals are an intentional and important part of the figurine or whether the genitals are merely out of proportion due to the small size of the figurine. In Greek art, exaggerated genitals often mark wild and bestial creatures, such as satyrs.

87 Plato, *Laws* XI 933b, trans. R.G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library 192 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926). The figurines may have alerted the victim that a binding rite had been enacted. R.L. Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, 252.

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Plato's three locations—entrances to buildings, at crossroads, and at tombs—suggest spaces that had significance for ritual enactments: residences or industrial buildings, ritual areas dedicated to deities, and funerary contexts, discussed above. For most known figurines, however, we lack useful information regarding their findspots or the circumstances in which the artifacts were discovered. This information could provide vital clues to the rituals and practices that surrounded the creation and deposition of the figurines, information that would surely expand our own understanding of ancient ritual practices. Like many other ancient objects, figurines have been looted from archaeological sites and have appeared on the antiquities market without provenance and with few indicators of the period in which they were created.

Doorways (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 20) mark the entrance to homes and personal spaces, and power objects could exert influence through proximity to their victims. These liminal spaces were accessible to an individual who wished to enact a binding rite. The house, too, could serve as an appropriate space for deposition. Four cast bronze figurines were discovered within a Hellenistic house on the island of Delos; three were depicted with their hands pulled behind their back and most had clearly been bound with bands.[88] The relationship between these objects and the residents of the house is not clear, and the limited information regarding the provenience of the find hinders interpretation. A practitioner may have gained access to the interior of a house for malign purposes to target the occupants, or a resident may have used his or her own domicile to bind a target at a distance.

Crossroads, where two paths met and diverged, were traditionally associated with the goddess Hecate and were likewise liminal spaces, often marked by a shrine.[89] Temples and shrines dedicated to divinities received both binding figurines and tablets. Four first century BCE figurines from Delos, each carved from a piece of lead, were discovered within the outer retaining walls of the temple of Zeus Hypsistos.[90] The male figurines have been pierced by iron nails through their eyes, ears and mouth, and appear to cover the nails with

88 Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 11; C. Dugas, "Figurines d'envoûtement trouvées à Délos," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 39 (1915): 413–23.

89 Curse tablets occasionally can be associated with crossroads: NGCT no. 15. On the significance of crossroads, see S.I. Johnston, "Crossroads," *ZPE* 88 (1991): 217–24.

90 Musée du Délos inv. nos. 3787–3790. A. Plassart, *Les sanctuaires et les cultes du Mont Cynthe* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1928), 292–93; Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 12. See further, the sixteen figurines discovered near a sanctuary at Tel Sandahannah in Palestine: R. Wünsch, "The Limestone Inscriptions of Tell Sandahannah," in *Excavations in Palestine During the Years 1898–1900*, ed. F.J. Bliss and R.A.S. Macalister (London: 1902), 158–87; F.J. Bliss, "Report on the Excavations at Tell Sandahannah," *Palestine Exploration Fund. Quarterly Statement*, (1900), 319–34; C.S. Clermont-Ganneau, Royal Ptolemaic

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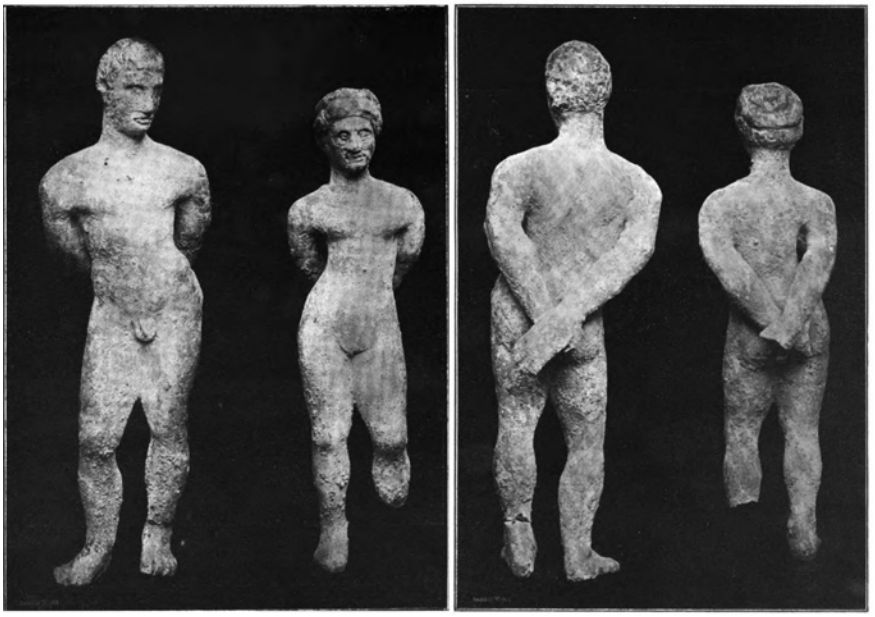

ILLUSTRATION 18.9 Nude figurines from Etruscan tomb at site of Sovana, depicted with hands bound behind their backs. 4th or 3rd century BCE. B. Nogara, "Due statuette etrusche di piombo trovate recentemente a Sovana," *Ausonia*, 1910. 31–32.

their right hands. The female figurines are bound by collars that have been placed around their necks. The placement of the figurines in the outer side of the retaining wall suggests that the practitioner intended to draw on the power of the divinity to facilitate the curse.

Outside of mainland Greece and the Greek speaking settlements of southern Italy and Sicily, contemporary Etruscan and Roman ritual specialists also made use of figurines for binding rituals. A pair of nude figurines, a slightly taller and larger male and a smaller female, each depicted in contrapposto stance and with their hands bound behind their backs, were discovered in a sixth century Etruscan tomb at the site of Sovana (Illustration 18.9).[91] The figurines, each inscribed with a single name in the Etruscan script on either the left thigh or hip, are dated to the fourth or third century BCE. The

Inscriptions and Magic Figures from Tell Sandahannah, *Palestine Exploration Fund. Quarterly Statement* (1901): 54–58, CTBS nos. 107–108.

91 B. Nogara, "Due Statuette etrusche di piombo trovate recentemente a Sovana, *Ausonia 4* (1910): 31–39; L. Mariani, "Osservazioni intorno alle statuette plumbee Sovanesi," *Ausonia* 4 (1910): 39–47; Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 18.

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precise function of the figurines—beyond the binding implied by the placement of the figurines' hands—remains in doubt.[92]

5 Images in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods

During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the use of figurines or other representations to compel erotic attraction appears in several literary works. Theocritus, the Alexandrian poet, writes of a fictional woman named Simaetha, who is in love with a young athletic man. To bring back her errant lover, she melts wax, perhaps shaped into a figurine, so that, in her words, "Delphis of Myndos (her lover) at once [will] be melted by love." While earlier texts, such as the Cyrene Foundation Decree, envisioned the destruction of those who violated the oath, Simaetha intends her lover to return alive. In Theocritus' poem envisions the heat from the flame causing pain and compelling her lover to come home.[93] Simaetha served as a model for Vergil's eighth *Eclogue*, which placed an unnamed woman and her servant girl, Amaryllis, in the roles of Theocritus' protagonists. The central female figure uses both clay and wax, formed into a pair of images and heated at the same time in a brazier, to draw her errant lover, Daphnis, home.[94] Such paired images of men and women become common elements of erotic rituals in Roman literature, as practitioners enacted ideal outcomes through figurines. In Horace's *Satires* 1.8, the poet envisions the witches Canidia and Sagana using a woolen doll and a wax doll in a rite; the larger woolen doll exerts power over the smaller wax image, which has been constructed in the pose of a suppliant. These same elements appear in Ovid's *Amores* 3.7, where the poet twice blames his own impotence on erotic spells. Ovid wonders "did a witch bind my name with red wax and drive fine needles through the middle of my liver?" Ovid's sexual failure is explained by a ritual act—the doll was pierced by a needle to deactivate or bind a part of the victim, in this case, his genitals.

A fourth-century BCE lead figurine from Carystos in Euboea may have been employed for a rite that extends binding rituals to erotic compulsion. The human shape has been likened to a gingerbread cutout; it appears to have been modelled as a three-dimensional figure and then flattened (Illustration 18.10).

92 It seems unlikely that these two images were used in an erotic spell, as both are treated in the same fashion.

93 Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 58–60.

94 C. Faraone, "Clay Hardens and Wax Melts: Magical Role-Reversal in Vergil's Eighth Eclogue," *Classical Philology* 84 (1989): 294–300.

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Two texts are written on the chest of the figurine, both targeting a female victim named Isias. The arms of the figurine appear to have been bound.[95] In the succeeding centuries, numerous examples of figurines and representations are employed for erotic ritual acts. The Hellenistic and Roman texts (like Ovid) may thus reflect knowledge of contemporary practices; while at the same time those very texts may have influenced the plastic techniques used by ritual specialists who sought to tailor their ritual performances to the expectations of clients.

From the second to the sixth centuries CE, we possess a large corpus of spell recipes from Egypt that provide detailed instructions for the enactment of rituals: the Greek and Demotic Magical Papyri, discussed by Dieleman (above, Chapter 13). While these texts were likely created for and used by temple personnel, they demonstrate the interconnected nature of ritual practices in the Roman period, as the spells draw on traditions and divinities from a broad range of cultures from around the Mediterranean. Local ritual experts, responding to the desires of both tourists and local individuals, often engaged in what Frankfurter has termed 'stereotype appropriation,' adopting the popular Roman caricature of the oriental wizard to satisfy the fantasies of prospective clients.[96] These texts provide insight into the myriad ways in which images might be used in rituals, complementing the archaeological evidence of figurines and images that were employed in performances.

Scattered throughout the spell instructions of the Greek and Demotic Magical Papyri are requirements that the practitioner should draw or inscribe a particular image as part of the ritual act.[97] P. Oslo I (*PGM* XXXVI) contains a series of drawings that are to be copied onto other materials; lines 231–255 instruct the practitioner to "take a lead lamella and inscribe with a bronze

95 L. Robert, *Collection Froehner* (Paris: Editions des Bibliotheques Nationales, 1936), 17–18; M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca* (Istituto poligrafico dello Stato Libreria dello Stato 1967) 248–9; SGD no. 64; CTBS no. 19; Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 15; Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls," 73.

96 D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1998), 177.

97 Despite the presence of sketches and written descriptions in the PGM that were intended to serve as models, there are only a few examples of correspondence between the instructional texts and enacted rites. See R. Mouterde, *Le glaive de Dardanos. Objets et inscriptions magiques de Syrie* (Beirut: Imprimérie Catholique, 1930); W. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; Annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)," *ANRW* II.18. 3417 n. 156; N. Bookidis, "Cursing in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Ancient Corinth (Summary)," in *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence*, ed. R. Hägg (Stockholm: Paul Aströms Förlag, 1994), 123–25; D.R. Jordan, "Magia nilotica sulle rive del Tevere," *Mediterraneo antico: economie, società, culture* 7 (2004): 693–710; C.A. Faraone, "A Greek Gemstone from the Black Sea: Amulet or Miniature Handbook?" *Kernos* 23 (2010): 91–114.

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ILLUSTRATION 18.10 Flattened figurine from Carystus, Euboea, Froehner VI.472. Lead. 4th century BCE. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet des Médailles.
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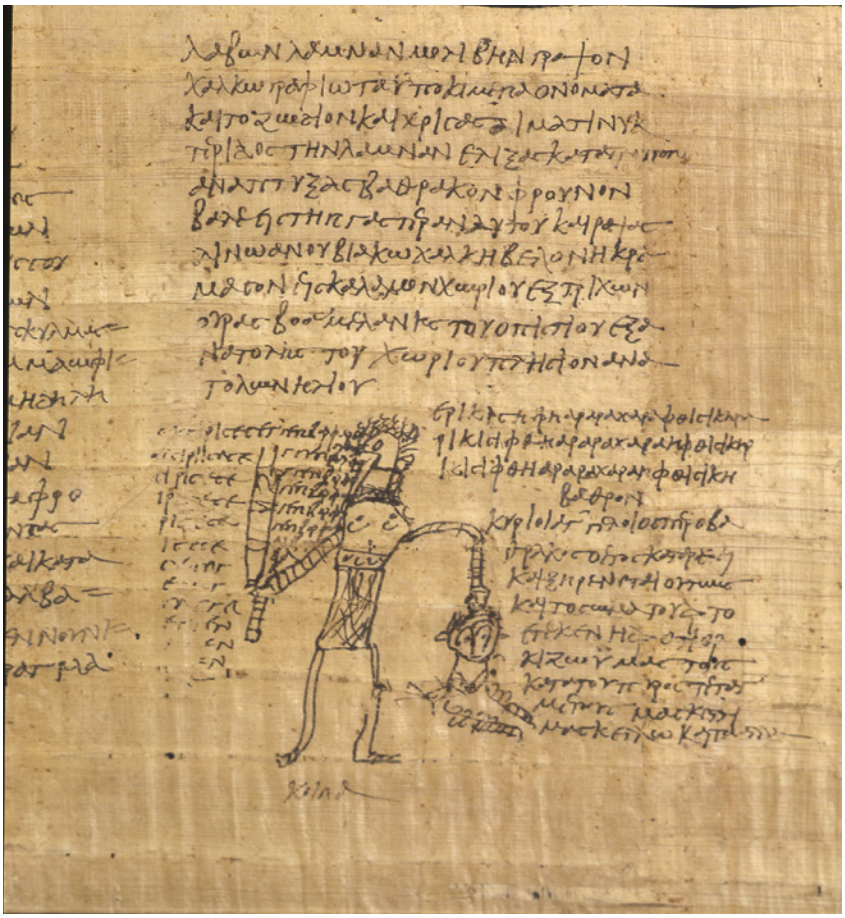

ILLUSTRATION 18.11 Detail of P. Oslo I = PGM XXXVI 231–255. Papyrus, 4th century CE. COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OSLO LIBRARY PAPYRUS COLLECTION

stylus the following names and the figure, and after smearing it with blood from a bat, roll up the lamella in the usual fashion …"[98] These instructions are followed by an image of a rooster-headed, anthropomorphic figure in military garb that holds a sword in one hand and a decapitated head in the other (Illustration 18.11). Other texts lack these models, but provide written directions for the creation of images. So, P.Bibl.Nat. Suppl. gr. no. 574 (*PGM* IV)

98 Trans. R.F. Hock, *GMPT*, 274–75.

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2006–2125 reads "And this is the figure written on the hide: A lion faced form of a man wearing a sash, holding in his right hand a staff, and let there be a serpent. / And around all his left hand let an asp be entwined, and from the mouth of the lion let fire breath forth."[99] The inclusion of models in the Egyptian spell instructions has a long history, and some of the images first appear during the Pharaonic period. On a magical papyrus from Leiden, the figure of Anubis standing beside the mummy bier appears as part of a fragmentary erotic spell written in Greek and Demotic (*PDM* xii. 135–146/*PGM* xii. 474–479) (Illustration 18.12). The image, in fact, can be traced to the New Kingdom, where it appeared along with Spell 151 of the Book of the Dead; it remained a popular funerary vignette well into the Roman period.[100]

Binding tablets could employ inscribed images that represented the victim of the spell.[101] In the upper corner of a curse tablet from Beirut, the practitioner has inscribed one such figure bound by ropes. Its arms and hands are not visible and have likely been turned behind the figure's back, and its legs are crossed. Another figure—perhaps a snake—menaces the bound figure from the right. The torso of the figure is punctuated by a series of dots which may represent nails that are used to transfix the victim.[102] Similarly, a tomb along the Via Appia outside of Rome included approximately fifty-six tablets, many pierced by nails, which were discovered in small sarcophagi and then placed within the tomb. One of the tablets consists of a series of drawings interlaced with the binding fomula: a torso rises out of what appears to be a sarcophagus, a horse-headed figure, holding a whip in one hand and a round object in the other, towers over two humans who may be in chariots, and a human figure is shown mummified and menaced by two snakes (Illustration 18.13).[103] These

99 Tr. E.N. O'Neil, *GMPT*, 75. Images may have been added by separate professional artists: L.R. LiDonnici, "Compositional Patterns in *PGM* iv (=P.Bibl.Nat.Suppl. gr. no. 574)," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 40 (2003): 170.

100 J. Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)* RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 33–34 and n. 38.

101 Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges*, 113; Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 74–75; M. Bailliot, "Roman Magic Figurines from the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire: An Archaeological Survey," *Brittania* 46 (2015): 97.

102 Mouterde, *Le glaive de Dardanos*, 110–17; CTBS, no. 5; M. Martin, *Sois maudit!: Malédictions et envoûtements dans l'antiquité* (Paris: Errance, 2010), 108–10.

103 R. Wünsch, *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1898), no. 16; R. Wünsch, *Corpus inscriptionum Atticarum. Appendix continens defixionem tabellae in Attica regione reparetas* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1897), no. 159; CTBS no. 13; Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no 23; A. Mastrocinque, "Le 'defixiones' di Porta San Sebastiano," *MHNH* 5 (2005): 45–59; Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges*, 117–20; Martin, *Sois Maudit!*, 104–7; Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 1–9; 267–72.

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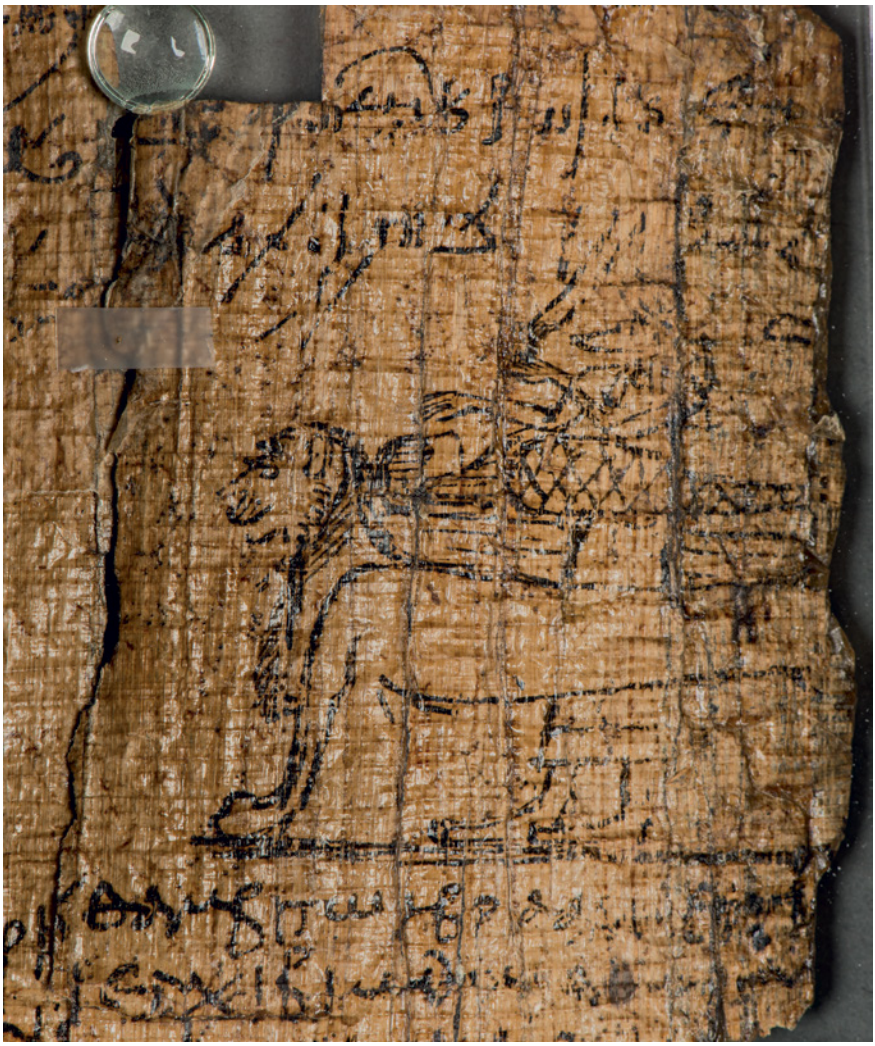

ILLUSTRATION 18.12 Detail of P. Lugd.Bat. J 384 V = *PGM* XII 474–479.
AMS 75 Leaf 1, image accompanying lines 474–479, Demotic Papyrus, magic, 4th century CE, National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden
COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES, LEIDEN.
PHOTOGRAPH ROBBERT JAN LOOMAN.

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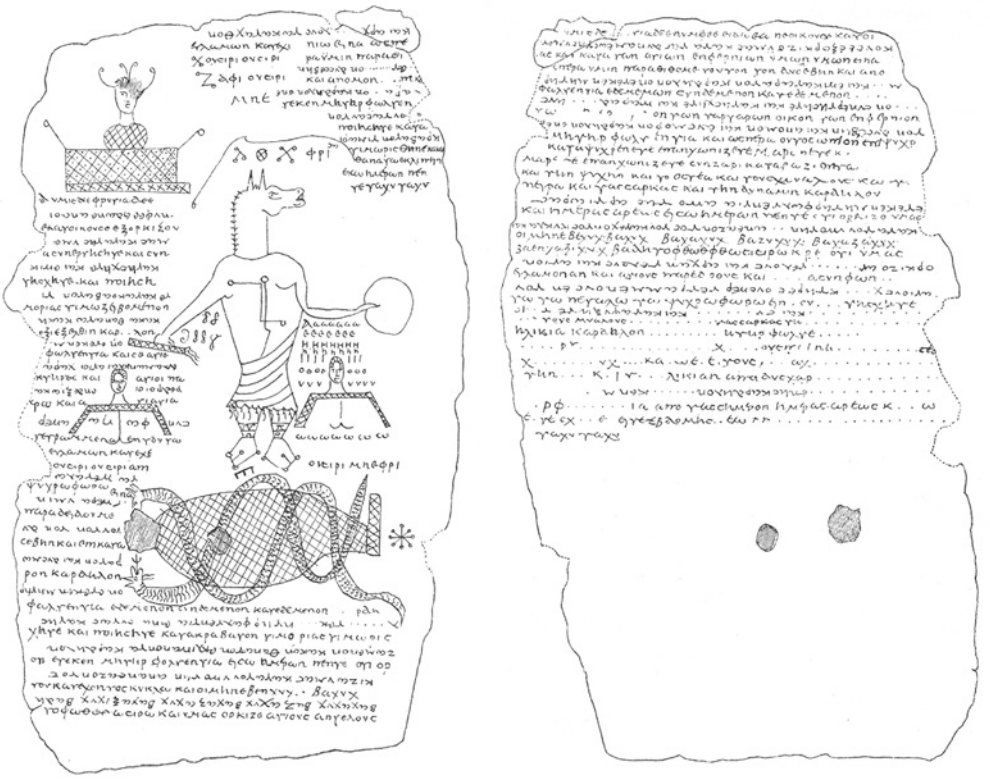

ILLUSTRATION 18.13 Lead tablet from the Porta di San Sebastiano on the Via Appia. Rome, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Museo Epigrafico—Terme di Diocleziano; inv. 52202. Line drawing reprinted from R. Wünsch. *Sethianische Verfluchungstafeln aus Rom* (Leipzig, B.G. Teubner, 1898), 16–17.

images represent the various participants involved in the binding rite: the dead individual to whom the spell is directed, a divinity who facilitates the spell, and the victim, bound and threatened by serpents. The graphic depiction of binding could also effect the imprisonment of malevolent forces in the so-called incantation bowls of late antique Mesopotamia (see Chapter 16).

As is the case on the binding tablets from the Via Appia, images of divinities often served to invoke the god as a witness or to aid the performance of a rite. Excavation in cemeteries at the sites of Hadrumetum and Carthage in North Africa uncovered numerous binding tablets that incorporated images of spirits invoked in the spells. On six of the tablets from Hadrumetum, a bare-chested figure wearing a plumed helmet and a thick belt and loincloth is identified by an inscription as Baitmo Arbitto. In one of these tablets, *DT* 286, the practitioner invokes a spirit (demon) to make the horses and drivers of the Green

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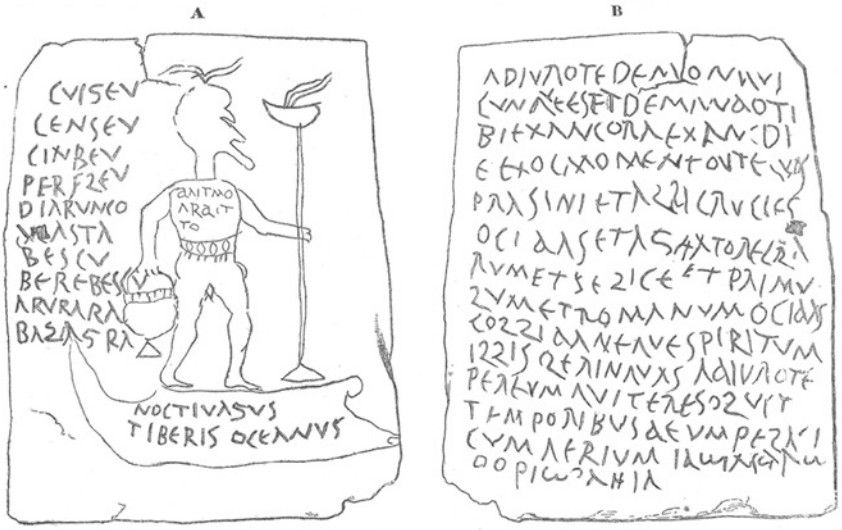

ILLUSTRATION 18.14 Line drawing of lead tablet from Hadrumetum, Audollent *DT* 286. Image reprinted from A. Audollent. *Defixionum tabellae quotquot innotuerunt tam in Graecis orientis quam in totius occidentis partibus praeter Atticas in corpore inscriptionum Atticarum editas* (Paris, A. Fontemoing, 1904), 397.

and White chariot factions fall, crash or be destroyed (Illustration 18.14).[104] A similar function can be proposed for an 'activated' love charm (rather than an instructional text) from Oxyrhynchus (P.Oxy 4673 = TM 101345) (Illustration 18.15). On the papyrus, an image of the god Seth in military garb holding a whip in his right hand accompanies a text that calls on Necessity to draw an unnamed woman to a man named Helenus.[105] Seth is not mentioned in the spell, but the god was likely invoked as part of the spoken rite, where the image would have goaded the woman until she came to the client, the one who commissioned the spell. In this instance, the drawing would have been an active agent within the spell, either fetching the beloved or, through its resonance with the god, forcing Seth to fetch the woman.

104 R.L. Gordon, "Competence and 'Felicity Conditions' in Two Sets of North African Curse-Tablets (*DT* nos. 275–85; 286–98)," *MHNH* 5 (2005): 69–76. Tablets with Baitmo Arbitto: *DT* nos. 286–91; Martin, *Sois Maudit!*, 103–4; Németh, *Supplementum Audollentianum*, 109–111; 200–205.

105 N. Gonis, D. Obbink, and P.J. Parsons, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 2004); see the discussion in H. Amirav, "Drawing and Writing: A Fourth Century Magical Spell from Oxyrhynchus," in *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, ed. S. Shaked (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 125–40.

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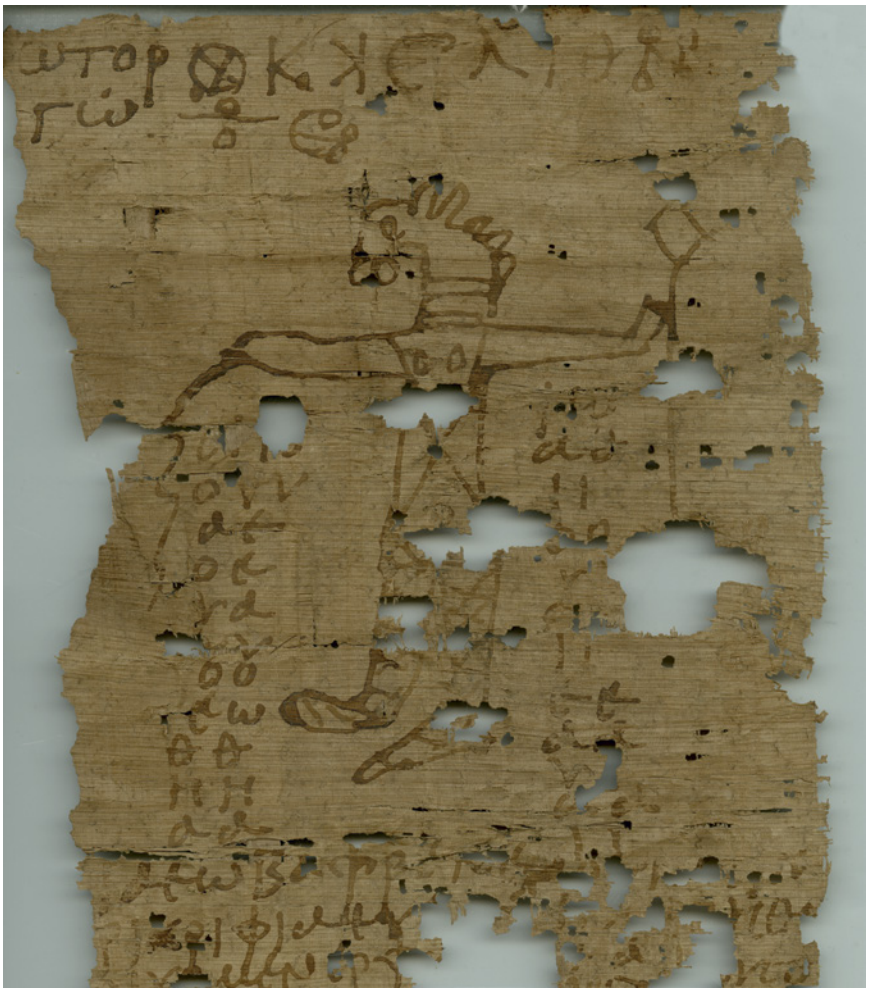

ILLUSTRATION 18.15 Detail of P. Oxy. 4673 = TM 101345 = Oxford, Sackler Library, Papyrology Rooms 84/68(a).
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE EGYPT EXPLORATION SOCIETY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD IMAGING PAPYRI PROJECT

Three dimensional images likewise were called to witness or assist in a rite. In a fourth-century spell from P.Bibl.Nat. Suppl. gr. no. 574 (*PGM* IV), 2359–2372, the practitioner creates a small figurine of the god Hermes from wax and plant juice, and having written sacred names on a strip of papyrus, seals the document in the back of the doll. To ensure the practitioner of success in trade, the figurine is treated in much the same fashion as a household god: it is draped with garlands, receives a sacrifice, and has a lamp lit in its presence.

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Apuleius, the second century novelist and philosopher, is accused of using a figurine of the god Hermes for similar purposes, and must defend himself against a charge of sorcery.[106] Mould-made figurines may have been utilized for similar purposes, ensuring protection for the home and its occupants.[107] As Apuleius rightly points out, there may be only a slight distinction between transgressive rites and domestic worship. Images of divinities and other spirits are commonplace on magical gems and amulets, where the representation was believed to aid the wearer. An image of the radiate lion-headed serpent Chnoubis, inscribed on green jasper, was thought to ease stomach discomfort; the presence of the god could be sought through his representation.[108] (The roles of images on gems is explored in more detail below, by Dasen and Nagy, Chapter 17).

The practitioner may have believed that he or she could control the spirits or divinities through the representation. In P. Oslo I.1 (*PGM* XXXVI), lines 69–101, a spell of attraction, the practitioner draws an image of a rooster-headed, cuirassed divinity holding a whip in one hand and a small human in the other on a strip of papyrus and places the object in a bath. According to the text, as the papyrus strip with the image of the god is heated, so should the god heat the potential lover. The spell requests that Typhon enflame the love of a victim (who is depicted in the left hand of the god) the divinity may be controlled using the god's sacred names.[109] Here, the divinity is invoked as an agent to perform the spell, and the image of the god is used to compel Typhon's assistance.

Throughout the Roman period, practitioners employed three dimensional images in binding rites, often in tandem with tablets.[110] Excavations at the fountain of Anna Perenna and her nymphs in Rome revealed a wide range of finds, including a substantial number of coins, a copper bucket, pinecones, eggshells, twigs, wood plaques, lamps, some of which included *defixiones*, twenty-two inscribed lead tablets, and a series of three terracotta and eighteen lead cylinders, six of which contained rough representations of human beings. One of the assemblages (inv. 475549) consisted of three nesting lead cylinders, each of which was sealed with resin. The third container enclosed

106 Apuleius, *Apology*, 61, 63–4.

107 Barrett, "Terracotta Figurines and the Archaeology of Ritual," 414–15; Smith, "Trading Places," 24–25.

108 C.A. Faraone, "Image and Medium: The Evolution of Graeco-Roman Magical Gemstones," in *'Gems of Heaven': Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity, c. AD 200–600*, ed. C. Entwistle and N. l. Adams (London: British Museum, 2011), 51–53; R. Gordon, "Archaeologies of Magical Gems," in *'Gems of Heaven'*, 43.

109 Compare *PGM* III. 1–164.

110 Bailliot, "Roman Magic Figurines," 96–98.

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a lead tablet inscribed with *charaktēres*, including a stylized *theta*, perhaps standing for 'deceased,' and an image of a human face.[111] Two nails pierced the tablet, including one that was driven through the inscribed human face. The tablet enclosed a small poppet, identifiable as human by its head and shoulders; the lower body tapered off into a tail or nail-shape. A molded snake, made of the same material, emerges from the beneath the lead sheet to attack the face of the figurine (Illustration 18.16).[112] The poppet was made of a variety of organic materials, including flour, wax, herbs, sugars, bound together with liquids including milk. The poppet was molded around an inscribed sliver of bone, suggesting a complicated rite in which the components themselves may have been both metaphorical elements and instrumental actors.[113] Like the Nkisi figurines from the BaKongo people, the ingredients that comprised the figurines may have been related to the intent of the spell or the target of the rite through metaphor. The bone may have been intended to model the body of the target; as humans have skeletons, so also the figurine may have been built around the structure of the bone. Alternatively, the bone may have conveyed the intent of the practitioner, to kill or damage the target. The ritual assemblage replicated the ritual goals by wrapping the victim in a tablet, piercing it with a nail, sealing it within the triple canister, and finally depositing it in the water of the fountain; each of these acts was intended to bind the target and remove them from the community.[114]

At the sanctuary of Magna Mater and Isis at Mainz, recent excavations have uncovered three clay figurines. Two of the figurines were discovered in a well that lay outside the *temenos* of the sanctuary. One figurine is roughly made, about 10 cm in height, with an approximation of a face, likely shaped by hand; male genitals are prominent. The forearms and the right leg are missing. The left side of the figurine preserves several holes, indicating that the object has been pierced with a needle or other sharp implement. The figurine was partly fired; it may have been heated with the intent of causing pain to the target of the rite. A second figurine was found in the well but dissolved after

111 J. Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, text no. 3, 218–219, 232–33.

112 M. Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 207–8; M. Piranomonte, "Anna Perenna: Une contesto magico straordinario," in *Contesti magici = Contextos mágicos*, ed. by M. Piranomonte and F.M. Simón (Rome: De Luca editori d'arte, 2012), 171–73.

113 Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome," 205–7; Piranomonte, "Anna Perenna," 173; Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges*, 99–100.

114 Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome," 208; Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges*, 104–12; Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 91–92; Bailliot, "Roman Magic Figurines," 97–98.

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ILLUSTRATION 18.16 Poppet discovered at the Shrine of Anna Perenna, Rome. The poppet was made of organic materials, including flour, wax, and a sliver of bone. A snake, made of the same materials, threatens the figure. The assemblage has been enclosed by a lead sheet. Museo Nazionale Romano della Terme de Diocleziano, inv. n. 475550.
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO—MUSEO NAZIONALE ROMANO

it was removed.[115] A third figurine is slightly larger, measuring 15 cm in height, and was associated with a binding tablet found nearby. A head and neck are attached to an oval body, which has a slight indication of arms and two short legs. The eyes and nose were formed by the fingers, and two small piercings for the eyes; a notch indicates the mouth. The figurine has both rounded knobs to indicate breasts and male genitals. The artifact was pierced all over with a pin or another tool, and broken into two pieces.[116] The figurine was found in a ditch, beneath a clay pot, and associated with the remains of fruit and a lead binding tablet.[117] Bailliot has suggested that the iconographic decision to

115 M. Witteyer, "Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls from Mainz: The Archaeological Evidence for Magical Practices in the Sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater," *MHNH* 5 (2005): 111; Bailliot, "Roman Magic Figurines," F1, 100.

116 Witteyer, "Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls," 111–14; Bailliot, "Roman Magic Figurines," F3, 100–101.

117 Witteyer, "Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls ," 111–12.

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include both male and female sex characteristics may reinforce the desire to exclude the target from the community, as prodigies displaying indeterminate sex were executed to purify Roman cities.[118] Approximately eighteen inscribed binding tablets were also recovered from inside the sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater.[119] Additional deposits of melted lead suggest that practitioners at the site placed other tablets into a fire; many other artifacts may have been deposited in this way. The intentional destruction of the objects may indicate that the tablets were envisioned as representations of the targets; the ritual process of melting the lead would have similarly destroyed or incapacitated the victims of the binding curses. In one of the tablets, this process is explicit: "may their limbs melt as this lead shall melt, in order that they may die."[120]

Gesture and manipulation were employed to imitate the desired outcome. The ritual celebrant may enact gestures to show his or her control over the target of the spell, or multiple images may be employed to enact the wished-for result. The "Wondrous Spell for Binding a Lover," recorded in P.Bibl.Nat. Suppl. gr. no. 574 (*PGM* IV) 296–466, instructs the practitioner to create two images from clay or wax—a bound woman with her hands twisted behind her back and an Ares (the god of war), armed, holding a sword, and threatening the female figurine. The practitioner is then told to personalize the female figurine by attaching some 'power-material'—presumably hair, nails, or a piece of her clothing—to her head or neck and to inscribe the figurine with empowering words. The practitioner next pierces the figurine with thirteen needles, plunging them into the woman's brain, ears, eyes, mouth, midriff, hands, pudenda, and soles while declaring that she will think (in each part) only of the one who commissioned the spell. Finally, the practitioner takes string from a loom and, having made 365 knots, ties the two figurines to a lead tablet that has been inscribed with a complicated binding formula and places the figurines by a recent grave.[121] Dominated and bound, the victim (represented by the female

118 Bailliot, "Roman Magic Figurines," 100–101.

119 Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae," 156–157.

120 Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae," no. 12 = DTM no. 11, 178.

121 Five additional Egyptian tablets and artifacts have been associated with the text of the *PGM* spell: a tablet discovered at the site of Hawara in the Fayum (2nd–3rd century CE, Cairo Museum Journal d'entrée 48217: C.C. Edgar, "A Love Charm from the Fayoum," *Bulletin de la société royale d'archéologie d'Alexandrie* 21 [1925]: 42–45; *Suppl. Mag.* I. 46, SB UV. 7425, *SEG* 8 [1937] 574, D.R. Jordan, "A Love Charm with Verses," *ZPE* 72 [1988]: 245–59); a lead tablet of unknown provenance, now in the University of Michigan Collection (2nd–4th century CE, P. Mich. inv. 757: Martinez, *Michigan Papyri XVI, Suppl. Mag.* I. 48); and a group of three artifacts, two lead tablets and the ceramic vessel that enclosed them, all discovered at Oxyrhynchus (2nd–4th CE, P. Köln inv. T. 1, T. 2, O. 409: D. Wortmann, "Neue magische Texte," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 168 [1968]: 56–80, Corrections in Jordan, "Defixiones

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figurine) is also threatened by a figure of Ares and depicted in the guise of a powerless prisoner.[122] The Ares figurine serves as an independent actor in the ritual.

The rite utilizes the language and methods of binding to ensure the sexual submission of the victim. The pins that pierce the image of the woman are intended both to transfix her and to cause her to suffer pain, preventing her from doing any acts (whether physical, sexual or mental) that are not specifically associated with the client. The one who commissioned the rite transfers the acts of desperation and submission from the figurine to its human counterpart, the victim of the spell. The figurine/target, along with the representation of Ares, is tied to a curse tablet, incorporating a further level of binding through the thread, and physically linking the target of the spell to the curse written on the lamella.

Archaeological evidence suggests that rituals of this sort were enacted throughout the Roman period. A tablet from Hawara inscribed with a spell text like the *PGM* text possessed two small holes, separated by approximately 1 centimeter, that are visible at the edges of the tablet, between lines 11 and 12; a complementary pair of holes appears at line 19.[123] These holes may have been used to affix a pair of figurines like those described in the tablet.[124] The Louvre figurine described at the beginning of this chapter (above, Illustration 18.1) shares a number of important features with the *PGM* instructions, but the representation of the victim operates in a very different manner. Most notably, the figurine of the woman was discovered alone, without an accompanying Ares statuette, and deposited within a clay vessel. This process bound the victim and the ritual text by enclosing them together in a jar; burial in a vessel

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from a Well." *Suppl. Mag*. 1. 49 and 50, Jordan, "A Love Charm with Verses," 245 and 246 n. 3, republished in *Suppl. Mag.* as nos. 49–51). In general, on the tablets, see Martinez, *Michigan Papyri XVI*.

122 Faraone has noted the close parallels between this representation and the public statues erected by the people of Syedra, where local inhabitants bound the god Ares so that he submitted to a *Dike*, or Justice. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, 75–78.

123 Edgar, "A Love Charm from the Fayoum," 42–43.

124 W. Brashear reported that two pairs of statuettes, including a bound woman and Ares, one pair of wax and one of clay, appeared on the antiquities market in 1987 (Jean Roudillon, 206, blvd. St. Germain, Paris, sold October 27–28, nos. 259 and 260): Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey," 3417 n. 152; Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," uncatalogued, p. 204. The authenticity of these objects is suspect, as they appeared on the market after the Louvre figurine. Compare the two wax figurines described by Edgar that are part of the collections of the Cairo Museum in Egypt: one of figurines depicted a man with the ass-head associated with the god Seth, portrayed with exaggerated genitals, while the other showed a woman, on her knees and with her hands bound behind her back. Edgar, "A Love Charm from the Fayoum."

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recalls Pharaonic execration rituals, which often involved depositing figurines in vessels.[125] This evidence may suggest that the practitioner responsible for the Louvre ensemble drew upon earlier, Egyptian traditions in enacting the love spell. The absence of additional information about the archaeological context for the object, however, prevents any further interpretation of the ritual involved in creating either this remarkable find or others associated with the *PGM* text.

Pairs of figurines may have been used to imitate erotic coupling. Two examples of pairs of wax figurines entwined in lovemaking are known; both likely derive from Egypt. One of the two pairs, attributed to a location north of Assiut, was discovered wrapped in an inscribed papyrus and placed within a clay vessel (Illustration 18.7).[126] In the text written on the papyri, the spirits of the underworld are invoked to bind Euphemia and to "burn her limbs, liver, female body …"[127] It seems reasonable that the female figurine is a representation of the target of the spell, Euphemia. The process of heating the two images, perhaps over a flame, would both enact the pain that the client hoped to inflict upon the victim and cause the two images to meld together. By wrapping the two figurines inside the inscribed papyrus and then sealing them in the jar the practitioner has effectively bound the victim (and himself) within the curse.

Other figurines may be associated with erotic rites, even though they lack inscriptional evidence. Two pairs of figurines in lead, each representing a man and a woman, were discovered in ancient Maurentania (modern Morocco) and have both been dated to the Roman period.[128] The legs of the man have been

125 Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 175. See also above, pp. 464–66. For a New Kingdom parallel, see G. Posener, "Les empreintes magiques de Gizeh et les morts dangereux," *Mitteilungen des deutschen archaologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 16 (1958): 252–70. Spell 1016 from the Coffin Texts reads "Oh you who are hateful … I put my hands on the jar in the bounds of which you sit, it descends before you" (trans. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 175).

126 Wortmann, "Neue Magische Texte," 85–102, no. 4. *Suppl. Mag.* 162, no. 45; Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," no. 28. A similar pair of wax figurines was purchased by the Staatliche Sammlung Ägyptischer Kunst in Munich. W. Brashear, "Ein neues Zauberensemble in München," *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 19 (1992): 79–109.

127 Cf. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 58. n. 81 for other examples of spells and *defixiones* that reference the burning or melting of limbs of the beloved. This spell bears similarities to a number of other binding incantations, which are similarly directed against specific body parts.

128 G. Souville, "Volubilis; Le collecteur principal du Decumanus Maximus," *Bulletin d'archéologie marocaine* 2 (1957): 175–83; R. Thouvenot, *Une colonie romaine de Maurétanie Tingitane: Valentia Banasa* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1941); Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil," nos 25–26.

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ILLUSTRATION 18.17 Figurines and papyrus discovered at Assiut. a. figurines as found within papyrus. b. two figurines entwined in erotic embrace. c. Papyrus curse written against Euphemia.
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twisted and the hands rest upon the abdomen; the female figurine is likewise twisted, but has no hands. A small figurine from Karanis, now in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, was not discovered with an associated text but shows clear signs of burning in an open flame.[129] This action likely transferred the pain of burning onto the target of the spell, forcing her to come to the individual who commissioned the rite.

129 A.T. Wilburn, "Excavating Love Magic at Roman Karanis," in *New Archaeological and Papyrological Researches on the Fayyum: Proceedings of the International Meeting of Egyptology and Papyrology, Lecce 8th–10th June 2005*, ed. M. Capasso and P. Davoli (Galatina: Congedo, 2007), 355–70.

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While images were frequently used to represent and manipulate the victim, practitioners animated figurines to act as assistants, sometimes fetching persons or objects. The use of a statuette for such a purpose appears in Lucian's *Philopseudes*, in which a sorcerer, in the employ of Glaucus, molds a figurine of Eros from clay and sends it off to fetch a woman named Chrysis.[130] In Lucian's tale, the figure takes wing and flies off, but a comparable ritual can be found in the ritual papyri. In *P.Lugd.Bat.* J384 (*PGM* XII), the practitioner creates a figurine of Eros from Etruscan wax and a variety of herbs. According to the spell, the Eros figure should be "eight fingers high, carrying a torch, and with a broad base to receive offerings. Let his left hand brandish a bow and arrow." The figurine is created with an accompanying Psyche doll, and offerings are made to the image, including a ritual killing of seven birds which are beaten to death.[131] The figurine, acting on its own agency, sends dreams to the victim until she comes to the home of the client. In each these situations, the image is understood as having its own volition and can undertake actions on behalf of the practitioner.

6 Conclusion

Figurines did not serve a single purpose in the rituals of the ancient Mediterranean, nor can we chart an accurate evolution of the ancient understanding of representation. Rather, across the cultures of Egypt, the Near East, Greece and Rome, the function and role of plastic and graphic depictions varied and shifted: images could serve multiple roles even within the same cultural context and time period. Most often, however, ritual practice reveals a shared belief in the connectedness of representation and antecedent. Regardless of physical similarity, the representation was thought to embody the person that was depicted, and actions taken against the image would be reflected in the victim. In the spell associated with the Louvre figurine, the practitioner, as he inserts pins into the doll that he has fashioned from clay, recites "I am piercing your brain, NN … I am piercing such and such member of her, NN, so that she may remember no one but me, NN, alone."[132] When he performs the rite, he addresses the figurine as if it were the woman that he desires.

130 Lucian, *Philopseudes*, 13–15.

131 Compare the Eros doll created as part of the Sword of Dardanos, *PGM* IV. 1716–1820 and *PGM* IV. 1872–1927 where the practitioner uses a figurine of a dog for a similar purpose.

132 Trans. E.N. O'Neil, *GMPT*.

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If images could serve such multiple functions within rites, it is equally challenging to determine at what point an object was created or used in the course of a ritual act. The aesthetic quality of an image is not sufficient for ritual efficacy, as representations did not even need to look like their antecedents, and ritual images vary significantly in terms of their crudeness or verismilitude. Most artifacts have been identified as components of aggressive ritual activity through the presence of inscriptions or by the pose or physical characteristics. Images, however, could represent another person or a divinity without these visible markers; practitioners could voice the connection between artifact and antecedent; and pre-exisiting objects or animals could be repurposed for use in rituals. Archaeological context provides one means of assessing the role of an object in a rite, but even that is not without its interpretive conundrums.

Although there are multiple problems in assessing the purpose of figurines or objects or even knowing which artifacts were intended for rituals, there is sufficient continuity in the use of images to reveal the importance of representations and images in performative acts in the ancient world. Beginning as early as the Old Kingdom execration deposits, and continuing through the Maqlû rites and into the Greek and Roman periods, images were instrumental in directing destruction against state and private enemies or ensuring control of adversaries and potential lovers. Representations were vital elements of ritual practice used by kings and Roman rabble, Babylonians and Athenians, in the pursuit of state and private desires. Throughout antiquity, practitioners utilized images to exercise power over a dangerous and hostile world.

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CHAPTER 19

Textual Amulets and Writing Traditions in the Ancient World

Roy D. Kotansky

1 Introduction

An amulet is a small protective device usually worn on the body to guard against unwanted supernatural influences, such as demonic attacks and ghostly visitations, or to provide protection and healing from specific diseases and illnesses thought to have a non-medical cause. These uses fall under the category "apotropaic," meaning the "warding away (of evil forces)." But more general functions such as procuring good luck, or targeting successful outcomes in a variety of social contexts (business, love, jurisprudence, and gamesmanship) also define a common use of amulets.[1] In death, amulets can even be used to protect the soul in its dangerous journey to the afterlife, as it attempts to navigate harmful archontic powers in ascent to its final resting place.

Amulets can be made from a variety of substances, ranging from simple herbal compounds tied in bundles about the neck to fragile scrolls of gold or silver sheet-metal (*lamellae*), that have been personalized with elaborate spells or prayers, inserted into tubular capsules, and worn for protection. The latter, especially—alongside the enormous corpus of engraved gems—have been found throughout the Roman Empire and provide our best view into the socio-religious seedbed that has spawned the widespread production of amulets. The *lamellae* are also matched by a sizeable number of amuletic texts copied onto papyrus that have been recovered principally from the arid sands of Egypt.

The wide-ranging historical and cultural milieux that gave birth to and fostered the production of amulets in the ancient Near East and greater Mediterranean worlds (including Egypt) makes it difficult at times to bring into sharp focus the abundance of materials under discussion. But the fact that ancient 'western' civilizations were largely literary societies—they maintained records and often venerated the written word—allows us to classify the study of amulets in terms of the level of literacy inherent in the production

1 In this sense they are often said to have a 'talismanic' function, in that they imbue, or 'charm,' the wearer with favor and fortune.

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of the magical texts themselves. From the earliest written records, it becomes clear that the spoken incantations and spells that began to be recorded onto non-perishable media, such as clay cuneiform tablets and ancient papyrus sheets, formed an integral part of the literary repertoire of the earliest Bronze Age societies whose temple scribes were required to preserve in written form its epics, myths, hymns, and healing rituals—both for the present life of its community and for subsequent generations. Although Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian texts from at least the third millenium BCE onwards (down to late Hellenistic, and even Imperial, times) have preserved numerous healing prayers and incantations on fired cuneiform tablets, few of these are actual amulets that were to be carried for personal protection. Rather, it is to Egypt, where papyrus became the medium for writing, and, somewhat later, to the Phoenicians, where fine metal sheets (of gold, silver, and lead) first came into use, that we must turn in order to properly pinpoint the 'origin' and development of the amulet as an inscribed, written device. That amulets of either papyrus or metal (and to a lesser degree semi-precious stone) were designed primarily to carry meaningful texts allows us to draw up a convenient cultural-literary taxonomy for amulet-study that applies to any period under discussion, whether early Egyptian or late Roman. Thus, literary classification will always go hand-in-hand with historical considerations, because the development of the amulet from spoken incantation to written text seems to follow a natural, built-in progression.

From this historical-literary approach, we first describe what can be classified as **'unlettered'** amulets—materials that are made from a variety of natural substances (e.g., plants, minerals, animal parts, and so on) but which carry no extrinsic or inherent literary meaning in themselves, apart from whatever natural properties attach to the *materia magica* in question, whether due to a subsequent supernatural meaning that it may have inherited from tradition, or because of some magical efficacy attached to it by some other means of ritual empowerment (immersion, sanctification, incantation, fumigation, and so on).[2] Secondly, we can envision **'semi-lettered'** amulets whose existing and inherently numinous materials are supplemented by a developing attention to a ritually efficacious iconography and a partial literacy of word and symbol. Here, as far as the Roman period is concerned, we have in mind the large corpus of magical gemstones, whose texts are primarily limited to a few divine names or magical words (a specific nomenclature of deities, *voces magicae*, angel-names, and brief, semi-literate slogans), but whose primary power to work is derived from the broad canon of its detailed religious iconology.

2 S. Eitrem, "Die magischen Gemmen und ihre Weihe," *Symbolae Osloensis* 19 (1939): 57–85.

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The richly variegated 'pantheon' of gems plays no second to the short texts and identifications that the limited surfaces of the gems' materials—mostly, quartzes, jaspers, chalcedonies, and haematites—make room for.[3] Thirdly, there is the question of the **'lettered'** variety of amulet—talismans whose magical efficacy is mainly recognized in the very written words preserved on them, whether in the form of invocation, petition, incantation, or exorcism. Since the social contexts of the use of amulets, overall, can best be learned from this 'lettered' variety, in that their texts will often spell out the special purpose, and other pertinent details, of the amulet's writing, their history and development will represent the main focus of our overview here.

How the category of either the 'unlettered' or the 'semi-lettered' amulet played out in their respective socio-religious worlds does remain important in the study of the history of amulets; attention to them here, nevertheless, must remain limited.[4] Most amulets of the 'unlettered' kind employed perishable substances that would not have survived the archaeological record. (Even if they had survived, their records remain mute, as they are by definition non-literary artifacts whose purposes, even in the most controlled of archaeological settings, can only be surmised). So too, surprisingly, do many of the real amuletic functions of individual 'semi-lettered' gemstones remain obscure, at best, since we are unable, as modern scholars, to defend the function of an image or obscure word, unless that word or icon carries a known meaning. Despite the best efforts of a Campbell Bonner, we really do not know what role an arcane figure such as the Anguipede ('cock-headed' deity), or the *leontokephalos* ('lion-headed' god) played in popular magic.

The classification of amulet-lore into these three categories of lettered, unlettered, and semi-lettered features offers a convenient hermeneutical context in which we can analyze the development of amulets in general terms, within their varied historical milieux. By using this matrix, we can better understand the major cultural-historical traditions informing the blossoming of amulet production in the Greco-Roman period. With these textual features in mind, this essay will go through Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Punic-Phoenician, Jewish, and Greek traditions of amulet-production, attending closely to both the artifacts themselves and to textual instructions for the preparation and use of amulets. In the last section I turn to the flowering of amuletic traditions and materials in the Roman period, concluding with a discussion of their dependence on various cultural heritages.

3 See above, Chapter 17.

4 Although see now C. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

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2 Mesopotamian Magic and Amulets

2.1 *The Mesopotamian Amuletic Tradition*

The study of magical writing begins, most naturally, with the earliest evidence of writing itself in the numerous Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform archives unearthed over the years, primarily in Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. Some of our earliest written documents are incantations and ritual texts that have been long studied in relation to religious (priestly) texts that combine the language of 'incantation' with that of 'religion'—temple liturgy. As can be seen most accessibly in Foster's anthology,[5] Akkadian literature preserves a rich nomenclature of demonological beings from which protection was sought.[6] Although many rituals and prayers have been preserved, often in multiple copies, these incantatory and exorcistic texts do not often preserve instructions on how to make amulets for protection. Only the most basic of amulet materials are usually mentioned, and these are mostly of the 'unlettered' variety. Considering the widespread use of knots and cords in the oldest incantations, it is quite possible that binding an herb or other magical material while uttering an incantation may represent the earliest form of amulet. Very often instructions occur in ritualized portions of the incantation itself which act as a sort of *historiola* informing the reader what sort of plant amulet, for example, was required.[7]

An early Akkadian incantation from the Archaic Period (ca. 2300–2000 BCE), entitled 'Against the Evil Eye,' appears to use a piece of hide from a flayed black virgin ewe filled with an unidentified plant as a kind of amulet.[8] The ewe, however, is first to be carried ritually around the house that needs protection, and then the sacrificed victim is to be submerged in water along with seven pieces of palm, oak, and something else, of unknown meaning. Although the details are sparse, the use of what apparently amounts to a small piece of the sheep's hide to roll up a magical plant points to the common use, latter, of leather

5 B.R. Foster, *Before the Muses. An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 2 vols., 2nd ed (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1996).

6 See J.J.A. van Dijk and M.J. Geller, *Ur III Incantations from the Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection, Jena* (Wiesbaden; Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 2003); G. Cunningham, *Deliver Me from Evil. Mesopotamian Incantations, 2500–1500 BCE* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1997).

7 *Historiola*: A brief mythic account or narrative of power (see, D. Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic & Ritual Power*, ed. M. Meyer & P. Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 457–76; S.I. Johnston, "Myth and the Getty Hexameters," in *The Getty Hexameters. Poetry, Magic, and Mystery in Ancient Selinous*, ed. C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 121–156); and below, Frankfurter, Chapter 22.

8 Foster, *Before the Muses*, I. 3, p. 58.

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capsules for amulets.[9] Indeed, in the Akkadian language, the practice of placing *materia medica* 'in leather' was so common that the term *mēlu* used of the enclosing bag is routinely rendered simply 'phylactery.'[10]

Another early, and more general, reference to an amulet in a long liturgical exorcism against illness makes the following plea on behalf of the wearer: "May the amulet set around my neck / keep all evil away from me, / May it drive away curse against me / or utterance portending evil."[11] The spell's subsequent reference to the tamarisk and other medicinal plants having apotropaic functions suggests that this amulet is herbal.[12]

Few of these early cuneiform texts have real instructional rubrics to guide the practitioner or inform the reader about how subsidiary amulets are used in the rituals. Instead, one needs to rely upon the mention of the *historiola* inserted as speech in the hymn's incantation to learn that an amulet is to be worn by the practitioner. This 'enchanted' mention of the amulet embedded within the text itself represents an early transitional stage towards the awarding of the amulet with power through the agency of the spoken word. Ironically, however, it is the 'spoken' word that is now inscribed onto the clay surface itself, and has become, *de facto*, a written amulet. This developmental stage is one that is commonly found in both early Near Eastern and Egyptian amulet-magic. It anticipates the later development of the act of enchanting, first, uninscribed objects to empower them as amulets and, then, the actual writing of texts onto the objects themselves to make them powerful amulets.

2.2 *The Legacy of the Mesopotamian Amuletic Tradition*

The use of such 'unlettered' mineral materials as amulets abounds in ancient pre-literate and early literate societies. In the cuneiform records, the Mesopotamian magical lore preserves numerous spells, mostly hymnic and incantational texts, to combat a variety of commonplace maladies, such as fever, headache, unwelcome ghosts, demons, and any number of imaginable household and civic afflictions. In the later Greco-Roman traditions, as documented in both the magical papyri and contemporary literary sources, this age-old pharmacology of 'unlettered' sacred plants, herbs, and roots in amuletic 'leech-craft' continues, unabated, alongside the waxing and growing pertinence of the written talisman.[13] Indeed, a kind of cross-breeding of

9 See, e.g., Anaxilas, below.

10 M. Stol, *Epilepsy in Babylonia*, Cuneiform Monographs 2 (Groningen: Styx, 1993).

11 Foster, *Before the Muses*, II, 590f., line 50ff.

12 Foster, *Before the Muses*, 590–91, lines 68f.

13 So J. Scarborough, "The Pharmacology of Sacred Plants, Herbs, and Roots," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. D. Obbink and C.A. Faraone (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991), 138–74.

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traditions occurs in instances where we find *uninscribed* materials (e.g., mule hide, bear's hair, cat's whiskers, a falcon's head, goat-skin, the tooth of a hyena, and so on) used as amulets in the same contexts where similar such materials bear actual inscriptions: e.g., an ass-hide *inscribed* with a love-spell; a horse' hoof *engraved* with a victory spell; leaves of laurel or sprigs of olive *inscribed* with ink; or even the rib of a young pig similarly *carved* with magic figures.[14] Since these kinds of perishable amulets do not usually survive the archaeological record, we cannot be certain that amulets engraved with cuneiform texts onto perishable materials did not indeed exist from the earliest times in Mesopotamia. However, the cuneiform records of the extant clay tablets that we possess do not often mention engraving such amulets, nor does it appear that inscribed cuneiform tablets worked as portable amulets, as yet, no doubt due to their cumbersome shape. There is, however, a limited body of cuneiform texts written onto smaller, portable materials (like carnelian), as well as a small corpus of Lamaštu plaques on stone (see further, below). And these materials—uncommon as they are—do represent an important link to the later, Roman-period magical gems that carry magical inscriptions.

The second-century CE writer Lucian of Samosata tells the story of a hoary *magos*, Babylonian no less (one of the so-called 'Chaldaeans'), who resurrected a vine-dresser named Midas, mortally wounded in his big toe by the bite of a poisonous viper.[15] The *magos* drove out the poison by uttering an incantation while simultaneously attaching to the sufferer's foot a fragment from the funerary stele of a young virgin girl, presumably engraved with the personal information typical to such a stela. Nowhere else in Greek or Roman literature do we read of such a peculiar 'monumental' amulet, so one is inclined to wonder whether the 'Chaldaean' identity of Lucian's wizard points to some 'hellenized' version of a much older Babylonian belief handed down over the centuries, a tradition that mentioned ancient spells written on old cuneiform tablets. In any case, in the style of a Christian Gospel miracle (John 5), this very Midas is then said to have picked up his own litter, on which he was first borne to the *magos*, as proof-positive of the Babylonian charm's enduring effect. He next marches back to his own farm where he first had been bitten and, with the *magos* in tow, has him recite a spell—from an 'old book,' it is said, containing seven sacred names—all the while fumigating the farmer's property with sulfur and torches in order to expel all the noxious vipers and reptiles. In what follows, Lucian provides a curious list of names of snakes (and/or

14 See R. Kotansky, "Amulets," in *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 2 vols. (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2005), 1: 60a–71b, esp. sections 5–6.

15 Lucian of Samosata, *Philopseudes*, 11.

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reptiles) evicted by the Babylonian's words. The list of snakes reads, *aspides, echidnai, kerastai, akontiai, phrynoi, physaloi*, with the last being a recalcitrant old *pythōn*. What we, in fact, have here is a list of seven 'species' of snakes (*opheis*) that would appear to match the very seven unnamed 'hieratic names' (*hieratika onomata*) uttered by the *magos* in his incantation. As a final act, the *magos* breathes upon the snakes and all species burn up in an instant. Thus the owner's land is purged of noxious creatures.

Such snake-banishing spells are common in the tradition of early Babylonian ritual, and it is unnecessary to look for exact parallels for such a rite (of 'cuneiform' spell-mongering) in Lucian's own period. However, one text in particular from the classical period of Akkadian literature (ca. 2000–1500 BCE) may be particularly instructive as a parallel, for in it there is mention, too, of a variety of different snakes to be drawn out from their various hiding places—snakes that are named in a kind of onomastic litany just like that of Lucian's spell. In the charm, the snakes are first addressed collectively (like Lucian's *opheis*), and then specifically categorized by name, as seen in the following snippet from the cuneiform original: "I seize the mouth of all snakes, even the viper, / Serpent(s) that cannot be conjured: the 'No-One-Is-There,' the 'Vacant Lotter,' the 'Fish' snake, the 'Colored Eyes,' / the 'Eel', the 'Hissing Snake,' the 'Hisser,' the 'Window Snake.' It came in by a crevice, / It went out by a drain. It struck the gazelle [sc. child] while it slept, / It secreted itself (?) in a withered oak," and so on.[16]

Although this group includes *eight* types of snake (not *seven*), there is certainly a thematic congruence between Lucian's Babylonian spell and the early Akkadian one to be seen here. Indeed, following the mention of various dangerous lurking-places that the snakes find in the Akkadian 'version', a specific mention of *seven* in relation to the serpents draws the association between the historical antipodes of our two spells somewhat closer: "The serpent has six mouths, seven tongues, / Seven are the poisonous vapors (?) of its heart."[17] With these parallels, and with the many mentions of snake-spells in the Babylonian tradition, it is not difficult to see in Lucian's Babylonian wizard an ancient recollection of a tradition much older than that of the second-century Roman Empire, whether or not his spell truly relies directly upon this Old Babylonian text or any other of past Near Eastern lore and literature.

When we turn to the 'semi-lettered' tradition of the amulets, such as those well-represented later in the Greco-Egyptian gemstones, we do have some comparative material in the Mesopotamian tradition, including recipes for

16 Foster, *Before the Muses*, I, 128.

17 Foster, *Before the Muses*, I, 128, after line 5.

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making apotropaic necklaces and pouches.[18] An archaic-period amulet from Uruk carries the pictographic sign 'EN'—evidently the Sumerian logogram for "spell"—during the period when writing was first developing.[19] Its brevity anticipates a later, Roman-period papyrus amulet (described below) that is engraved only with the Greek letters 'PA'. More widely represented are the numerous protective figurines, such as the well-known Lamaštu (mostly ninth to seventh century BCE) and Pazuzu amulets (seventh century BCE, on),[20] as well as the "Evil Spirits" series,[21] and the variety of magical deities and figures to be reproduced, in various media, for protective purposes.[22] Sometimes these amulets carry fragmentary inscriptions that are difficult to read or indecipherable, either in pseudo-cuneiform, Aramaic, or apparent fragments of incantations. These characteristics lead one to believe that the script comprises "fantasy signs," or imitative writing used as "magical signs."[23]

A growing corpus of Mesopotamian amulets of the first millennium BCE also come in the shape of iconic friezes with deities, or in the shape of "small writing tablets (with iconic and epigraphical elements)" that petition various deities of the Babylonian-Assyrian pantheon.[24] A good example of such first-millenium incantations (Akkadian written in Babylonian script) on miniature clay writing tablets can be found in Finkel, but there are no standard corpora of the Near Eastern inscribed clay amulets of this specific lettered variety.[25]

A ritual "to block the entry of the enemy in someone's house" uses, *inter alia*, a "golden axe and a silver saw" for touching, ritually, a tamarisk tree during the

18 T. Abusch and D. Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*, vol. 2 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2010).

19 A. Berlejung, "There is nothing better than more! Text and Images on Amulet 1 from Arslan Tash," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 36 (2010): 6.

20 W.G. Lambert, "An Old Babylonian Letter and Two Amulets," *Iraq* 38 (1976): 57–64; N.P. Heeßel, *Pazuzu. Archäologische und philologische Studien zu einem altorientalische Dämon*, Ancient Magic and Divination 4 (Leiden; Köln: E.J. Brill, 2002); M. Cogan, "A Lamashtu Plaque from the Judaean Shephelah," *Israel Exploration Journal* 45 (1995): 155–161; H. Klengel, "Neue Lamashtu-Amulette aus dem Vorderasiatische Museum zu Berlin und dem British Museum," *Mittheilhungen des Instituts für Forschung* (1960): 334–55; I. Finkel, "Lamaštu Amulet," *Archaeology & History in Lebanon* 13 (2001): 60–62.

21 *Utukki Lem nuti* series, see below.

22 Berlejung, "There is nothing better than more!"

23 Berlejung, "There is nothing better than more!," 7. See below, Frankfurter, Chapter 23.

24 Berlejung, "There is nothing better than more!"

25 See Irving Finkel. "Lamaštu Amulet," *Archaeology & History in Lebanon* 13 (2001): 60–62 (cf. above, note 20). For other lettered Lamaštu amulets see now W. Farber, *Lamaštu. An Edition of the Canonical Series of Lamaštu Incantations and Rituals and Related Texts from the Second and First Millenia B.C.*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 17 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014).

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recitation of an incantation; and later, in the purification of a clay pit, "seven grains of silver, seven grains of gold, carnelian, and the *hula*[*lu*-stone]" are needed to effect the ritual.[26] Later, a group of magical figurines—ten statues of dogs colored with paste—are to be engraved with powerful, epithetal names that serve an apotropaic function.[27] Such protective dogs and other animal-statues are reminiscent of early Greek "Beastly Guardians of the Gate," as Chris Faraone aptly puts it—epitomized in Homer's telling episode of the "gold and silver dogs, immortal and unaging forever" that stand in protection before the palace of the Phaeacian king Alcinous.[28] Faraone discusses this passage in relation to Near Eastern, particularly Assyrian, engraved statues of animals that are strategically buried or erected to protect temples, palaces, and other urban monuments against plague, military invasion, storms, and other harmful influences.[29]

2.3 *The* Materia Magica *of Mesopotamian Amulets*

The use of materials with peculiar properties—such as those made of gold, silver, carnelian, and other substances—anticipate the use of similar *materia magica* in the later ritual traditions (although a standard corpus of the body of extant Mesopotamian 'lettered' amulets is still in progress).[30] The most famous of these amulets with specific material properties are the Lamaštu amulets: portable plaques from the Old Babylonian to Neo-Assyrian periods that reproduce short sections of "canonical" Lamaštu ritual texts along with depictions of the fierce lion-headed, bird-taloned goddess. In copying only small sections from the long ritual incantations, such texts resemble the Egyptian uses of limited passages from the Book of the Dead, inscribed on scarab amulets (see below). And although the master-texts from which these Mesopotamian amulets derive sometimes specify which substance to use for inscribing the amulet—e.g., "on a cylinder seal made from clay"[31]—the extant amulets are often recorded only as inscribed on "stone." Farber offers a representative example of such a text used as an amulet:

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26 F.A.M. Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu. A Profile," in *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible. Its Mediterranean Setting*, ed. M. Stol, Cuneiform Monographs 14 (Groningen: Styx, 2000), 219–24; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits. The Ritual Texts*, Cuneiform Monographs 1 (Groningen: Styx, 1992), 13, line 147.

27 Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits. The Ritual Texts*, 15, lines 195–205.

28 Homer, *Odyssey*, 7. 91–94.

29 See C.A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses. Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); and above, Wilburn, Chapter 18.

30 See now Farber, *Lamaštu*, 30, with mention of the unpublished work of Goetting, and Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu. A Profile," 219–24.

31 Farber, *Lamaštu*, 145.

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> SPELL (= ÉN): Oh Lamaštu, daughter of Anu, prominent one among the gods, / Innin, most princely lady—/ (but also) 'binder', grievous asakku-demon, / ghost that weighs heavily upon mankind: / So that exalted Lamaštu should not come close to man, / may you be bound by the spell of heaven, bound by the spell of earth![32]

This use of an image in combination with an inscribed text for protection anticipates, in a general sense, the later, Roman-era apotropaic gemstones that combined the two features, often using a 'pseudo-script.'

There are many ancient formularies for the use of such amulets in the form of necklaces and pouches, written against disease or harm, or wishing to bring good fortune, although they do not mention the use of inscribed materials.[33] But an excellent example of the 'lettered' kind of amulet is that found in the rectangular gemstone published by Lambert in 1976 that preserves on a small carnelian stone (3.1 cm. × 2.0 cm) portions of a Sumerian incantation of the *Utukkū Lemnutū*-type (see below), constructed of "extracts from various incantations."[34] It is dated broadly to the 2nd millennium BCE, or possibly later, and begins with "a magic formula with unknown meaning" (sc., én.é.nu.ru) and goes on to contain a short *historiola* of sixteen lines, written on its two sides and edge, describing the birth of the wicked entity to be exorcised by a host of heavenly and underworld figures. The carnelian was pierced through the center for suspension as an amulet.[35]

Carnelian thus seems to have been especially valued for amulets, as were meteorites: the latter possessed properties of their own and were seen to fall out of the sky—that is, from heaven. Both carnelian and meteorites become regular material for engraved intaglios, while gold and silver—often found in tandem—were the metals *par excellence* for the writing of protective *lamellae* in the Greco-Roman period. Further, it bears mention that the widespread use of Babylonian stamps and cylinder seals in many ways anticipates the use of magical gemstones in the Roman period. Seals of various stones, bone, or shell

32 Lamaštu, Ser. II, 129–134, trans. Farber, *Lamaštu*, 177. On the amulets, overall, see Farber, *Lamaštu*, 29–34; 39–42; 48f. (nos. Aa–Ao); 194f., etc., who brings the number of known examples of the amulets (published, or otherwise) to 96, of which only 15 are inscribed. These do not include the examples from Ugarit, or that from Emar (Farber, *Lamaštu*, 290–293).

33 Abusch and Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Rituals*.

34 See Lambert, "An Old Babylonian Letter and Two Amulets."

35 A second example published in Lambert, "An Old Babylonian Letter and Two Amulets," is made of clinochlore (chlorite), formerly thought to be steatite but contains an exorcism still difficult to decipher.

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could be engraved with elaborate religious scenes and carry cuneiform texts, usually for purposes of identification. But as safeguards for property and signs of ownership, the rich iconography of seal engravings, when rolled out onto a soft clay surface, could have functioned as protective devices even if not strictly amulets.[36]

The best case for the use of stones as amulets in the tradition of Babylonian magic can perhaps be instanced in the handbook series known as the *abnu šikinšu* (= "the nature of the stone is"). In this cuneiform series, the inherent properties of various stones are given: e.g., which stone proved best for appeasing anger, which was best for preventing migraine, which worked for gaining favor, and so on.[37] These medical applications represent the very same concerns found in the later Greek magical papyri and in kindred literary records of the written magical tradition.[38] Although these stones are not engraved but depend upon their material for their inherent power (*šiknu* = "nature"), they mark a special progression towards the 'semi-lettered' tradition of the later engraved magic gemstones and certainly show a link with the kinds of engraved carnelian tablets just discussed. In the later Greco-Egyptian gemstones, too, we see a reliance upon both their material *and* what is engraved on them for their magical efficacy. As Reiner has noted, it was already in the first century CE that Pliny the Elder and others recognized that stones had magical properties to work specific tasks. But it is not until the second century CE that we find the true beginnings of the engraved magical gemstones.[39]

In Babylonia, however, various semi-precious stones, shells, beads, and colored glass were routinely worn as amulets. Indeed, another 'stone-book' contains rituals for making such amulets from 'twelve' (in fact, thirteen) named stones for a variety of functions.[40] This 'stone-book' and related texts for making amuletic necklaces (of stone, plant, and tree materials) anticipate the tradition of the Hellenistic *Cyranides*, in which plant, bird, stone, and fish are alphabetically enumerated for amulet use, as well as the whole tradition of later amuletic stone-lore.[41] In the Lamaštu series (= Lam. III), an elaborate necklace made of a variety of stones is similarly detailed, along with other

36 Erica Reiner, "Magic Figurines, Amulets, and Talismans," in *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, ed. Ann E. Farkas *et al.*, (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1988), 27–36.

37 Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 85/4 (Philadelphia: APS, 1995): 119–32.

38 Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*, 122–25; 130–32.

39 See above, Dasen and Nagy, Chapter 17.

40 Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*, 128–30, with note 598.

41 Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*, 130–31.

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materia magica, and strung with different colored wools, over which an incantation is to be spoken seven times. The short incantation is mostly composed of untranslatable 'magic syllables,' identified by earlier scholars as Elamite.[42] Apparently unique to the Babylonian tradition is the ritual of 'irradiating' objects (especially statues adorned with stones and precious metal) under the nighttime stars and constellations in order to imbue them with numinous power.

2.4 *Exorcism and Healing by Amulets in the Mesopotamian Tradition*

The famous incantation texts *Utukkū Lemnutū* (Udug-hul incantations), now edited by M. Geller,[43] is preserved in an "Archaic Sumerian Version," a "Mature Bilingual Version," and a "Late Bilingual Version."[44] Part of the ritual in the series requires placing parts of the tragacanth tree (= "goat-thorn" [Gk.])—a leguminous gum known for its healing properties—near the head of the patient in order to exorcise evil phantoms and spirits from the demoniac. At the same time, the client's benevolent 'genius' is invoked to come alongside for specific aid:

> May the evil phantom, evil demon, evil wraith, evil sprite, evil god, evil lurker, / Be conjured by heaven, be conjured by the netherworld! / Th(is) man, son of his (personal) god, may the evil phantom who has seized him stay outside, / May the favorable protective spirit stand at his head, / May the favorable guardian spirit stand at his side.[45]

Included in the spell is a mythic *historiola* extolling the origins and virtues of the black tragacanth plant, which "grew up in Eridu, it was created in a pure place. / Its appearance was pure lapis, stretching out to the depths."[46] This kind of exorcistic text, albeit centuries removed from the tradition of both the Palestinian Jewish amulets and the Greco-Roman *lamellae* discussed below, provides a valuable backdrop to the specifically exorcistic texts of those specialized corpora. The exorcistic spells of the papyri and amulets represent a kind of healing text that in many respects are *sui generis* and invite closer study with their Near Eastern and early Semitic counterparts.

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42 Farber, *Lamaštu*, 1–87 189, 255, with additional refs. = Lamaštu, III, lines 30–63.

43 M.J. Geller, *Healing Magic and Evil Demons. Canonical Udug-hul Incantations* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), *non vidi*.

44 So Foster, *Before the Muses*, vol. II, 834–36.

45 Foster, *Before the Muses*, II, 835.

46 Foster, *Before the Muses*, II, 835.

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Thompson's older studies also provide ready access to these *Utukkū Lemnutū* rituals (there articulated *Utukki Limnuti*, "evil spirits"), where in one version a wooden figurine is placed near the body of the man, and a bandage or colored cord is bound to his head.[47] Here the spirits that cause headache, toothache, heartache, and so on, are banished with the use of ritual, incantation, and a kind of 'proto-form' of the 'lettered' amulet: the binding of the head with a bandage while an incantation is uttered. This anticipates the eventual *writing* of the spell onto the bandage, or cord, to be tied onto the head, as a clear development towards the written amulet. Early Sumerian or Babylonian societies, of course, would not have had the convenience of papyrus (or metal *lamellae*) for the recording of headache spells, and the like. But the operation here serves much the same purpose: a ritual object or amulet is imbued with magical potency at the applicable site by the efficacious power of the enchanted word. The enchantments are recorded for us by a peculiar act of proxy: the archival materials preserved on the early cuneiform tablets usually contain little more than the incantations themselves, but these themselves become increasingly 'embedded' with various internal references spelling out what purposes they serve, what plant-amulets they require, and what rituals are to accompany them.

The use of a 'proto-form' of the written amulet anticipated in this last spell and appearing in increasingly common application in the tradition of Egyptian amulets, taken up below, also occurs early in the Greek tradition, in a well-known case recorded in Plato's *Charmides*. Since this spell, too, deals with the treatment of headache using an uninscribed amulet on the way to being engraved, it seems appropriate to discuss it at this point. In the dialogue, Socrates is said to have learned a spell from "one of the Thracian healers (*iatroi*) of Zalmoxis,"[48] a divine king of the Getae famous for his knowledge of spells for healing and granting immortality. In this case, the remedy was a certain leaf (*phyllon ti*), no doubt medicinal, but one that was said to be effective only when applied with an incantation (*epōidē*). Apart from the enchanted word, the remedy would prove inoperative (*ouden ophelos*).[49]

We never learn the incantation itself, only that Charmides was eager to record (*apograpsomai*) it in writing. The verbal form used here to record the spell means "to have a copy made." This interest to document what had heretofore been only part of the specialist's oral craft points to the transmission

47 R.C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, 2 vols. (London: Luzac and Co., 1903–1904; Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1976), tablet D, vol. I, 158–65.

48 Plato, *Charmides*, 156D.

49 Plato, *Charmides*, 155E.

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of ritual texts in papyrus format—papyrus being the medium of writing for books already in fifth-century BCE Athens.[50] Here we are but one step away from having a leaf of laurel (like that mentioned, above) or a 'leaf' of gold engraved with the very spell to be applied to the headache. At some time after the oral spell got copied down, the small prescription itself would serve as the amulet, whether it was kept on the original chit of papyrus or recopied onto another medium. Indeed, we already know from the time of the comic poets, Aristophanes (5th/4th century BCE) and Anaxilas (4th century BCE), that amulets with inscribed texts had come into use among the Greeks, as the former humorously alludes to finger-rings engraved with spells, and the latter mentions the practice of carrying a set of sacred inscriptions, known as the 'Ephesian Inscriptions' (*Ephesia grammata*), inside of capsules made of stitched leather, not unlike that seen earlier on with the Babylonian ewe-hide.[51] These 'Ephesian letters' themselves would undoubtedly have been copied onto papyrus or metal, for fragments of incantations in Greek hexameters containing these famous *grammata* (and contemporary with Anaxilas) have been found in key locations around the Mediterranean basin, written on lead. Internal evidence, however, shows that by the fifth century BCE there were magical handbooks already in use, so we can believe that at this time (if not earlier) there were handbooks that collected the kinds of protective amulets known by Socrates.[52] The presence of a widespread corpus of lead curses also affirms the establishment of *written* magic, mostly curses, whose earliest examples from Sicily can be dated to ca. 500 BCE.

3 The Egyptian Amuletic Tradition

3.1 *Amulets in the Pyramid Texts*

The traditional development of the amulet from 'unlettered' minerals to sophisticated, written texts finds a particular noteworthy expression in the ancient Egyptian material available to us, for the Pharaonic concept of *heka* (often translated "magic," in the sense of the power of priestly ritual) embodies a special relationship between priestly ritual notions and the written word in that

50 Cf. H. Blanck, *Das Buch in der Antike* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992), 24–29.

51 Anaxilas, fr. 18, ed. T. Kock, *Comicorum Atticorum fragmenta* 2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1884); Aristophanes, *Plutus* 883–85; see R. Kotansky, "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Magical Amulets," in *Magika Hiera*, 110–11.

52 The Getty Hexameters, a late 5th century BCE amulet on lead from ancient Selinous in Sicily, implies the use of a formulary in that it describes, *inter alia*, instructions for writing verses on tin, when the tablet, in fact, is made of lead. The text is discussed further, below.

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culture's veneration of the hieroglyphic mode of writing.[53] The earliest contiguous corpus of preserved religious materials, the **Pyramid Texts**, represents an elaborate body of mortuary spells designed to assist the deceased King's ascent through the nighttime skies (or to other quasi-geographical realms of the dead). Carved onto the walls of the inner chambers of the pyramids of King Wenis (*aliud* Unas, Unis), the last Fifth Dynasty Pharaoh (ca. 2300s BCE), and the subsequent Sixth Dynasty Pharoahs (Teti, Pepi I, Merenre, and Pepi II)—whose reigns ended the Old Kingdom Period (ca. late 2100s BCE)—these writings surround the King's body with an elaborate amalgamation of ritual texts and spells designed to resurrect and transform the ruler into a divine being *en route* to his final home in the celestial afterlife (we note that the ceilings of the burial chambers are decorated with stars).

In order to become one with the resurrected Osiris (or any number of other deities such as Re, Horus, or Thoth), the deceased King must first be revived through a series of rituals (e.g., the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony). He also must be presented the appropriate food- and material offerings (including investment with ritual garments, religious implements, royal insignia, unguents, and so on) and needs to meet various modalities of purification and empowerment before he can assume absolute authority among the Imperishable Stars. Thus, in the King's attempt to transcend mortality and gain recognition among the pantheon of deities, it is essential that he be protected by a series of sacred utterances in textual form: i.e., the Pyramid Texts themselves. These texts, therefore, represent a complex body of spells, incantations, and prayers that seek both to install the king properly among the stars as a supreme being and to thwart the many obstacles, various harmful influences, and the host of noxious beings thought to impede the achievement of the divinized King's goal. Grouped together among the many ritual utterances of the Pyramid Texts are collections of spells addressed to ward off snakes and other noxious creatures. These 'Snake-Spells,'[54] although akin to later, common snake incantations occurring on papyrus amulets, are in fact spells against noxious cosmic beings, as one can see, for example, in the untitled Utterance 299, whose opening sentence reads, "The serpent is in the sky, the centipede of Horus is on earth … O *shn̲t*-snake, I will not be opposed," etc.[55] Such serpent spells are common, too, in the later Coffin Texts, and are mentioned further below.

53 See above, Dieleman, Chapter 6.

54 R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts. Translated into English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), nos. 226–244; 276–299; 375–399, for example.

55 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 89, no. 299.

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Despite the variety of impediments facing the deceased Pharaoh's heavenly ascent, the Pyramid Texts offer a network of competing methods to assist the King's safe crossing to the other side: he can ascend by becoming a bird of flight, by using a celestial 'ladder,' or even by mounting a lightning bolt (known to 'flash' from ground to sky, as lightning often does); and in all of these texts the use of the spoken word, with a presumptive application of pertinent amulets is presupposed. In another set of texts used to bridge these 'transitional' obstacles, we also find descriptions of certain 'ferry-crossing' spells that aim to assist the King's fording of a variety of celestial causeways, including the Milky Way, heavenly Lakes, or other supernal bodies of water. Liminal portals or gateways also represent such celestial thresholds which require magic ritual to cross. These 'obstacles' in subsequent traditions (e.g. the Coffin Texts, below) further describe by-passing unsafe netherworld geographies (for example, Lakes of Fire) and the subduing of canine monsters (cf. the Greek Cerberus), as well as overcoming other theriomorphic dangers (crocodiles, vultures, pigs, etc.). There are also complex spells for avoiding ensnaring nets and fish-traps that can entangle the ascent of the Pharaoh's spirit-body.

One of the examples of a 'ferryman' invocation in the Pyramid Texts is particularly illustrative from an historical perspective, for it mentions the actual carrying of *unlettered* amulets to assist and protect the King in his journey. The divine gate-keeper of Osiris is invoked at the beginning of the spell to say to the god, Osiris, the following sacred text:

> … Let me fetch for the King this boat of yours in which your pure ones are ferried across in order to obtain for you cold water at the (polar) quarter of the Imperishable Stars, so that I may ferry across in it together with that *head-band of green and red cloth* which has been woven from the *Eye of Horus* in order to bandage therewith that finger of Osiris which has become diseased. I walk quite unhindered, for the ordinance of the Great Lake protects me.[56]

The point to note is that this afterlife invocation works by a kind of 'para-mythological magic': that is to say, what is said of Osiris in the spell (fetching of the boat, obtaining cold water, bringing of the Horus-amulet, bandaging of the finger) applies, in fact, to the deceased Pharaoh himself, who is being sympathetically identified with Osiris as a divinized god. It is he, the Pharaoh, who requires boat, water, amulet, and healing. The Pharaoh himself, then, must have carried within his coffin the green-and-red Horus-eye amulet described

56 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 192, para. 1201.

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in the text and is the one, perhaps, who needs his own finger healed, in order to be whole and healthy in the afterlife. Each of the elements of the spell has, in these earliest sequences of Pyramid Texts, a counterpart that applies to the resurrected King, but the repeated mention of the Eye of Horus (*wḏ3.t* = the *Uḏjat*-eye, "the sound one") as an object to be taken along points to the particular veneration of this hoary protective amulet in afterworld contexts. It is mentioned, *inter alia*, in a number of short formulas addressed to the deceased Pharaoh *qua* Osiris, such as in the following stock formula: "O Osiris the King, take the Eye of Horus," etc.[57] The healed eye of Horus, originally plucked out in his intermittent battles with Seth, was considered from Old Kingdom times on to be one of the most powerful of amulets, even respected for its ability to bring Osiris back to life. In the form of pendants of polychrome glazed ware, semi-precious stone, gold-foil, or any number of media, the *Uḏjat*-eye was worn throughout the Egyptian period.[58] Its use continued well into Roman times, and a prescription to write a silver *lamella* in *PGM* III.410–423 (for supernatural memory) also preserves a depiction in the papyrus for how to copy an elaborate *Uḏjat* eye for use on the *lamella*.

Another text, among the more archaic of the 'snake-spells,' also carries within its invocation a protective reference to amuletic knots: "These are the two knots of Elephantine, which are in the mouth of Osiris, etc."[59] This is no doubt an allusion to what the King carries for post-mortem protection. Yet despite such references to amulets set into the narratives of the texts, no internal references to *written* amulets are unambiguously recorded in the Pyramid Texts; rather, the engraved chambers of the pyramids seem to serve as monumental protective devices in and of themselves. In a word, as divine utterances that are also *carved as written texts* inside the funeral environment of the divine Pharaoh, the Pyramid Texts prove to be lengthy and elaborate *amuletic texts* whose entire purpose is to safeguard and protect the whole ritual of the King's ascent to the next world, as ruler. As they come to us in the format of the Pyramid Texts, the spells carved onto the walls of the inner chambers of the Pharaoh represent a kind of monumental amuletic tradition: *in toto*, spells whose function are meant to surround, protectively, the King in his funeral house at burial. The texts themselves, though, show a distinct applicability to practical concerns—to everyday rituals—and in them we have the

57 *Utterances*, 26–71.

58 Note esp. C. Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994).

59 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, 55, no. 230.

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very beginnings of a written amuletic tradition whereby sacred texts become 'miniaturized' for eventual portability as individual amulets.

3.2 *Amulets and the Mortuary Process*

An important secondary development of this whole process, during the Middle Kingdom, involves the writing, with ink, of additional sacred spells onto the wooden lids of coffins belonging to wealthy Egyptians. These texts, a continuity of the older Pyramid Texts with numerous expansions, developments, and embellishments, consolidate the ritual and protective function of the magical 'utterances' of their immediate literary ancestors, moving towards a purely amuletic function. They bring the written medium of the spells into closer proximity to the body of the deceased royalty. In tandem with this process we discover also a burgeoning interest, in the Coffin Texts themselves, in the value and sanctity of the writing process itself. In other words, incantation alone is no longer essential, but the preservation of the text itself as magic assumes greater importance. Whereas Egyptian magic once revolved around the spoken utterance, it now became the sacred word of the *written* utterance as well. Writing, to be sure, had been important all along, as evidenced in the very existence of the carved Pyramid Texts and the inked Coffin Texts. Now, however, the writing within the spells themselves became a matter of self-identification.

In the final stage of what was surely a long process, the so-called Book of the Dead (see below) preserves this tradition of inscribed amulets in the form of actual scrolls that are buried with the dead as afterlife protective manuscripts. Already in the Middle Kingdom these texts are being preserved on small portable amulets, such as engraved scarabs and other amuletic pendants: Sekhmet figurines, Djed-pillars, and especially the powerful Wedjet (or Udjat) Eye, mentioned above. Such 'semi-literate' amulets abound in the archaeological record, along with numerous uninscribed animal-shaped objects of glass, faience, carnelian, steatite, coral, bone, and other permanent materials. At this time, too, a number of individualized 'lettered'-amulets, which correspond to the longer spells of the later Greco-Roman gemstones, begin to appear. These amulets normally carry texts from Chapter 30 A, B of the Book of the Dead, a chapter whose accompanying rubric instructs its placement on the neck of the deceased. The scarab and 'heart'-amulets of steatite, basalt, marble, and jasper are often personalized with the names of the bearer. Sometimes the portions of the scarabs where the names are to be filled in have been left blank.[60] But it is clear that such names of the bearers represent entitled nobility or

60 Note Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*, pl. 44, with mention of an example of 13th Dynasty date, ca. 1710 BCE.

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at least wealthy patrons, and it is worthwhile to ask whether such attention to the high status of the client is to be recognized in the clientele of the later gold, silver, or high-quality papyrus amulets of subsequent periods. The use of the personalized elements, in any event, points to a feature commonly recorded on the amulets of all media (gemstones, papyrus, metal) in the later Greco-Roman eras.

A good example from the Coffin Texts of the process of creating amulets for burial—and further, for the rudimentary role of writing in the making of such amulets—occurs in Spell 83, where we also witness the growing use of rubrics (instructional titles literally inked in red) within the tradition. Indeed, this text itself is nothing but a rubric for its preceding spell (no. 82), and thus serves as a kind of stand-alone amulet: "To be recited over the forepart of a lion made from carnelian (?) or from the bone of a vulture, to be given to a man for his neck when he goes down to the necropolis <as> protection from the soul of Shu," etc.[61] The carnelian or bone amulet does not itself appear to be inscribed, but the text of its preceding spell is to be chanted over the object. Another example, Spell 508 mentions the placing of part of the '*Im3*-tree on the man's neck as a post-mortem amulet. In no. 555 (a spell to make one "to be beside Thoth"), the incantation claims (for the deceased) that "I have made an amulet against her who is warlike."[62] Yet another example (no. 576) carries the rubric that the spell (to enable a man to copulate in the realm of the dead), is "to be recited over a bead of carnelian or of amethyst, to be placed on the right arm of the deceased."[63] Whereas such spells cannot claim, as the priest does in Spell 96, that "my magic [is] in my ritual incantation",[64] the ritual of uttering spells over sacred, amuletic objects becomes more and more common in the Coffin Texts.[65] A movement in this direction is witnessed by no. 648: "My magic spells are on my mouth,"[66] a notion that is especially pertinent when read in the context of the powerful words that the deceased claims for himself when he recognizes that he is "mighty by means of what is on him." This is a reference to the actual protective amulets the deceased is wearing on his body.[67]

61 R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, 3 vols., Vol. I: Spells 1–354; Vol. II: Spells 355–787; Vol. III: Spells 788–1185 & Index (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1973–78), I, 88.

62 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, II, 166.

63 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, II, 181.

64 Spell 96, line 89, trans. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, I, 95.

65 Cf. Spell 304.

66 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, II, 224.

67 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, II, 244–45, with note 2; cf. also Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, III, 950: "my pillar amulet is in my hand," p. 86.

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We finally come to the point within the Coffin Text tradition where some spells begin to mention actual papyrus amulets in their sacred utterances. In no. 295, for example, the deceased is to become the "scribe of the altars of Hathor," and, in order to reassemble his own corpse (in the afterlife), he lays claim to the power to do so "by means of papyriform amulets," an unmistakable indication that written amulets were buried in the coffin.[68] Similarly, in a series of Snake Spells (nos. 370, 372), the rubric contains the instruction that "the man should recite this spell over it." But with no referent for what "it" is, we can only imagine (with Faulkner) that the use of a written spell is to be envisioned. Here, then, we probably have a written amulet whose text itself is uttered over it, but only after it has been copied onto a piece of papyrus. In no. 473, then, the claim that "I will bring and repeat the words of the gods" is only conceivable if the magic spells are now in 'papyriform.' Furthermore, a threat "to break your pens and tear up your papers" (no. 430) must mean to deprive someone of his magical power—reflecting a greater consideration of the scribal culture itself (in the form of amulet-making). In 695 we read of the command to Osiris that he "open the chest of writings so that they may hear the word of this god …";[69] and in no. 1130 specific mention is made to a magic word written on the back of a papyrus roll.[70]

3.3 *New Developments with the Book of the Dead Literature*

The understanding of written Egyptian texts as magical materials in and of themselves reaches its penultimate stage in the presentation of those beautifully illustrated papyrus scrolls known collectively as the "Spells of Emerging in Daytime," or, in modern parlance, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, dating to the New Kingdom. This now-elaborate corpus of written spells (or, 'chapters') carries on in greatly expanded form the former traditions of the texts earlier described in the literatures of the 'Pyramid Texts' and the 'Coffin Texts,' respectively. For our purposes, what is most remarkable about this collection of spells is the fact that their rubrics provide increasingly detailed descriptions of how amulets are to be chanted and/or written. Indeed, now that the long tradition of post-mortem spell-writing in Egyptian has come to fruition in book-form, we begin to witness a blurring between what is indicated on papyrus as a ritual incantation (only to be spoken) and what, by virtue of being written on that papyrus, functions itself as an amulet ready for independent use.

68 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, I, 219; and esp. II, 538–545, for a group of 'scribe'-spells.

69 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, II, 260.

70 Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, III, 168.

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However, before the actual inscribing of amuletic texts onto papyrus we find instructions for writing texts onto other media, such as the following rubric found for Spell 30A, B of the Book of Dead. The spell itself, too long to quote in full, is an invocation to the deceased's heart, as it is being weighed in the judgment scales of Anubis. Its instructional rubric reads (in part) as follows:

> To be inscribed on a scarab made from nephrite, mounted in fine gold, with a ring of silver, and placed at the throat of the deceased. This spell was found in Hermopolis, under the feet of this god. It was written on a block of mineral of Upper Egypt in the writing of the god himself … etc.[71]

What is noteworthy here is the handing down from one source to another of this venerable—indeed divine—spell through various processes of *writing*. First found engraved on the base of a stone statue of a god, the text of this spell is preserved, according to tradition, by being copied onto a nephrite scarab. Numerous examples of actual spells like this, as mentioned, have been found on scarabs, so we can see the transferral of religious texts from the Book of the Dead onto 'semi-lettered' media (here, scarabs) that anticipates the similar copying of spells in the Roman period.[72]

It is only a matter of time before the papyrus chit serves as the amulet itself, examples of which we shall see below. Beginning perhaps as early as the Middle Kingdom period, when we find numerous instructions for preparing amulets (but not the actual amulets), we can anticipate the genesis of true written amulets. An early reference in the Edwin Smith Papyrus (ca. 1600 BCE) instructs that images of gods, but not the incantation proper, *be drawn* with myrrhed ink onto a strip of linen and applied to the throat; but such a practice must be earlier.[73] Further, "the Egyptian language does not distinguish between writing and drawing. Both actions were denoted with the verb *zš*,"[74] so this practice may represent the earliest example of a 'lettered' amulet. The earliest unmistakable instance is that of the London Medical Papyrus (P. BM EA 10059), dating to ca. 1350–1300 BCE (late 18th Dynasty), which describes an incantation to be written in its entirety onto a strip of linen to protect a woman

71 R.O. Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), 63.

72 Of course, the industrious scribe who wrote the rubric of Spell 30 A,B, in some very early recension of the Book of the Dead, would have had to use ink and papyrus to copy the text from its original statue-base.

73 J. Dieleman, "The Materiality of Textual Amulets in Ancient Egypt," in *The Materiality of Magic*, ed. Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremmer, Morphomata 20 (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 33–34.

74 Dieleman, "The Materiality of Textual Amulets in Ancient Egypt," 34.

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from bleeding.[75] These examples give instructions only, not the actual amulets. For the actual amulets we have to wait until the Late Middle Kingdom or New Kingdom, as described below.

The long rubric falling at the end of Spell 101 of the 'Book of the Dead' ('For Protecting the Bark of Ra') also provides an excellent example of the culmination of this process whereby spoken incantations became written amulets. Its initial remarks provide the following instructions: "To be recited over a strip of royal linen on which this spell has been written in dried myrrh; to be placed on the throat of the blessed dead on the day of burial …—," etc.[76] This represents an important secondary development from rubrics that enjoin sacred texts to be spoken only (not written): "To be spoken over a human-headed bird of gold inlaid with semi-precious stones and laid on the breast of the deceased"[77]—rubrics that recall similar processes in the Coffin Texts. Such rubrics that instruct spells to be spoken over uninscribed amulets occur at Spell 155 (a golden *djed*-pillar is to be 'enchanted') and at 156 (a knot-amulet of red jasper is to be so 'charmed').[78] In this later example, the description of the short invocation reads as if it were ready for an earthly—as well as afterlife—application, a process we have already witnessed with the earlier 'snake' spells: "The amulet is a protection for this Great One, which will drive away whoever would commit a crime against him."[79] In a word, amulets for the deceased are working their way towards effective use as amulets for the living.

3.4 *Egyptian Amulets for Healing and Protection*

Although actual papyrus amulets that serve to protect in everyday life (apart from funerary context) are not attested until the conclusion of the Middle Kingdom, it seems that many of these, like their Coffin Texts counterparts, are instructional materials that preserve traditions of speaking incantations and tying knots in 'unlettered' contexts. The spells address the usual afflictions: plague, the evil eye, demonic influences, hemorrhage, eye complaints, headaches, burns, swelling, fever, and so on. Many of these amulets have been arranged and translated in Borghouts.[80] The spells are preserved, for the most part, on ostraca, papyrus, and wood, although several are also recorded on stelae: e.g., the Horus '*cippi*' and healing statues, all of considerably later date.

75 Dieleman, "The Materiality of Textual Amulets in Ancient Egypt," 34.

76 Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 117; similar, but even more elaborate, is the example at the end of 144, Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 159.

77 Spell 89, end; Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 98.

78 Both, Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 177.

79 Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 177.

80 J.F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, Nisaba 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).

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The rubrics of the spells in this disparate corpus tend to follow in the pattern of the traditional funerary texts discussed above. Words are chanted over objects—carnelian, a piece of linen, flax, tamarisk, or various doughs concocted from vegetal 'lumps'—rather than directly engraved. In several instances spells are spoken over fine linen on which animal figures are drawn (i.e., not hieroglyphic words) and to which magic knots are attached.[81] These procedures represent a kind of forerunner to the engraved amulet. Sometimes, mineral or unengravable objects are empowered by magic utterance, as the specialist holds the stipulated material in his hand or the substance is applied as a salve, poultice, or bandage.[82] In one case, gold pellets, a garnet, and a crocodile seal are strung with fine linen, to be made into an amulet (*wḏ3*) and attached to a child's neck.[83] In another case, words are uttered over a lion of faience, threaded with red linen and applied to the hand, as a protection (*s3w*) against snakes in the bedroom.[84] In this diverse corpus of texts, truly 'lettered' amulets, engraved on an object, are less common than their 'unlettered' counterparts. In one instance, a short mythological vignette addressing stomachache is appended with the instructions that "This spell is to be said, written on a new dish (*mḫ.t*) <in> yellow ochre."[85] Although such rubrics are uncommon, it must be recognized that at some point these various written spells on papyrus become, and serve, as amulets in themselves.

The earliest extant evidence of the instructions themselves serving as amulets comes around the 12th century BCE. The text in question, a papyrus amulet from New Kingdom Deir el-Medina, represents the best example of a fully 'lettered' textual amulet, and it inaugurates a long Egyptian tradition of writing protective or healing spells on sheets of papyrus that extends well into the Ptolemaic, Roman, and Byzantine periods.[86] A spell of six lines inked onto a chit of papyrus in hieratic script during the reign of Ramesses III (20th Dynasty), the Deir el-Medina amulet protects, by the royal decree of Osiris, the bearer from male and female *nsy*-spirits, male and female spirits of the deceased, male and female opponents, as well as burning (*p3 srf*) and itching (*t3 rmnt*), by banishing all to the underworld Yalu-fields of Geb.[87] The amulet was further attached to a linen strip, itself drawn with figured deities

81 Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, no. 13; cf. nos. 6, 18, 40, 55, 84.
82 Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, nos. 15, 21, 43–45, 64.
83 Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* no. 68.
84 Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* no. 142.
85 Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* no. 49.
86 Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, no. 55; Dieleman, "The Materiality of Textual Amulets in Ancient Egypt."
87 Dieleman, "The Materiality of Textual Amulets in Ancient Egypt."

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(Re, Osiris, Horus, Seth, Isis, and Nephthys) who represent the 365 days of the solar year. The strip was then formed into a plaited and knotted necklace as an adjunct to the amulet text itself.

The remarkable feature of this inscribed spell is its inclusion—as part of the text itself—of the instructions for writing the amulet itself: "God's words, to be said over two divine barks and two *udjat*-eyes, two scarabs, drawn on a new piece of papyrus (*ḏm' n m3w*). To be applied to his throat, that it may drive him out quickly."[88] We thus witness a perfect example of instructions for chanting magical amulets combined with the applied amulet itself (although the instructions do not match exactly what we find on the actual amulet).[89]

Another important Egyptian artifact attested from this period is the so-called Oracular Decree Amulets, engraved capsules that contain strips of papyri on which are written the promises of the temple god to protect their owners from diseases, dangerous spirits, and other threats, like bites from poisonous animals.[90] These amulets also serve to protect from death and judgment in the afterlife, and so they show a continuation of the traditional amuletic function of the Pyramid and related texts. The use of engraved sheet-metal rolled up to form capsules was a common Middle Kingdom feature proceeding in various forms well into the 26th Dynasty (7th–6th cent. BCE), and beyond.

To cite one example of the Amuletic Decrees: it is a capsule of fine gold, with the text engraved on its side, reading, "Words recited by Khonsu in Thebes

88 *P. Deir el-Medina* 36, lines 5–6: Dieleman, "The Materiality of Textual Amulets in Ancient Egypt," 27.

89 The evidence for the writing of such early engraved amulets in the New Kingdom is fully discussed in Dieleman, "The Materiality of Textual Amulets in Ancient Egypt," with a list of examples and special reference to the earlier papyrus instructions for writing such amulets, which predate the actual amulets. He lists at least 70 examples of such textual amulets of the Pharaonic Period, most of them on papyrus, but a few on linen, not including amulets with single Book of the Dead spells (usually vignette nos. 166, 100, 129), nor more recent examples that have also come to light (e.g. H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, *Magika Hieratika in Berlin, Hannover, Heidelberg und München* [Munich: De Gruyter, 2014]). For the less direct evidence for writing amulets, Dieleman, "The Materiality of Textual Amulets in Ancient Egypt," discusses papyrus instructions for writing amulets that begin as early as the Middle Kingdom Period and extend well into the Nubian period (and later).

90 I.E.S. Edwards, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, 4 ser.: *Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the late New Kingdom*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum, 1960); A. Klasens, "An Amulet Papyrus of the 25th Dynasty," *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen* 56 (1975): 20–28; B. Bohleke, "An Oracular Amuletic Decree of Khonsu in the Cleveland Museum of Art," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 83 (1997): 155–67; T.G. Wilfong, "The Oracular Amuletic Decrees: A Question of Length," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 99 (2013): 295–300.

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Neferhotep; he made a goodly protection [for] *šꜣḳ*, the justified."[91] Another pair of such metal tubes reads: "Words recited by Amenrasonther, the good god, lord of heaven; he made a goodly protection for *šꜣḳ*, the justified" (Text A); and, "Words recited by Isis the great, mother of the god, who dwells in Coptos; may (?) she protect *šꜣḳ*, the justified" (B).[92] What is noteworthy about these texts is the basis of their potency, although in written form, in divine utterances first *spoken* by the gods. These texts thus continue to emphasize the chanted word. The written word remains secondary, albeit important for amulet-making. The written charm continues, in the mentality of the scribe, to be the embodiment of what had been divinely uttered.

4 The Punic-Phoenician Amuletic Tradition

Egyptian-style amulet-capsules have been uncovered throughout the Phoenician West, especially at major trade centers like Carthage and Tharros in Sardinia. These materials date primarily from the seventh to fifth centuries BCE, and no doubt grew in popularity through the cultural exchange fostered by trade between Egypt and Carthage. Much of the study surrounding these amulets has centered on the designs of the capsules, particularly on the Egyptian style of their tops. Worn perpendicularly, rather than horizontally (as with later amulet-capsules), these cylindrical tubes usually terminate in a bust of an Egyptian deity (Bastet, Sokhit, et al.) or an animal-form closely identified with a deity: a swan's head, ram, jackal, falcon, lion, hare, or even a human head. Although most of the tubes are fashioned from gold or silver (and occasionally bronze), we do also find examples in bone, wood, enamel, lead—with both Egyptian and Phoenician representations.

Most important, however, is the presence of long strips of gold or silver foil found rolled up inside the capsules, strips incised with hieroglyphs and animal figures. These *lamellae* generally preserve prayers for overall protection that are written in tiny letters in Punic along the edge or margin of the strip.

An example of one such gold *lamella* from Carthage (Tomb 212) in the Musée Alaoui (sec. 5), E 4, found inside a lion-headed capsule, shows a procession of Egyptian figures in four registers, along with two Punic inscriptions engraved as follows: 1) "*Protect and guard Hilletsbaal, son of Arishatbaal*," and 2) "*Guard*

91 J. Ray, "Two Inscribed Objects in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 58 (1972): 251–53.

92 J.D. Bourriau and J. Ray, "Two further decree-cases of *šꜣḳ*," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 61 (1975): 257–58.

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and protect Hilletsbaal, son of Aristobaal." Vercoutter identifies the figures as representations of the Fifty-Nine Decans (deified star clusters) of the so-called Sethi I B family, similar to those found at the Egyptian temple of Denderah.[93] A more recently published example contains the same formula: "*Protect and guard Eshmunyaton son of 'my*."[94] Another gold capsule with the head of a lion, from Sulcis in Sardinia, contained fragments of a gold tablet depicting a sun flanked by two wings atop the Egyptian sign *mn* (i.e., "be firm; established").[95] On either side appear two griffins. A narrow gold band, found in a gold case terminating with the head of a falcon and lion, from Tharros in Sardinia, was inscribed with a double row of hieroglyphic figures—figures again representing the Fifty-Nine Decans, who personify the supposed effects of the planets on human lives and are generally viewed as lords of life and death. A Punic inscription on it has not been deciphered.[96]

A second example from Tharros, this time of silver, had for its Punic inscription a text reading, "*Protect, guard, and bless šy.*" Another silver example from Tharros depicts Egyptian figures in an afterlife judgment scene (including the bark of Ra), to which is added a Punic inscription: "*Protect 'Abdo, the son of Samway, before the Lords of the Balances*." Here the silver *lamella* is plainly written to guarantee safety in the hereafter.[97]

There is also a gold capsule found in a tomb at Malta (in 1694) that depicts a protruding mask of a human face. Inside the capsule was found a gold strip engraved with the Fifty-Nine Decans of the Sethi I B family, in two rows, along with a Punic inscription running along its upper, right hand corner

93 J. Vercoutter, *Les objets égyptiens et égyptisants du mobilier funéraire carthaginois*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 40 (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1945).

94 L.A. Ruiz Cabrero, "El estuche con banda mágica de Moraleda de Zafayona (Granada): una nueva inscripción fenicia," *Byrsa* 1 (2003): 85–99; M.G. Amadasi Guzzo, "Une lamelle magique à inscription Phénicienne," *Vicino Oriente* 13 (2007): 197–206; J.D. Smoak, "Amuletic Inscriptions and the Background of YHWH as Guardian and Protector in Psalm 12," *Vetus Testamentum* 60 (2010): 1–12.

95 Q. Pisano, *I gioielli fenici di Tharros nel Museo Nazionale di Cagliari* (Collezione di Studi Fenici 3; Rome: Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, 1974), 437–44, no. 166; Günther Hölbl, *Ägyptisches Kulturgut im phönikischen und punischen Sardinien*, 2 vols, EPRO 102 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 1.346–48, taf. 164/1.

96 Pisano, *I gioielli fenici di Tharros nel Museo Nazionale di Cagliari*, no. 166; see now also M.G. Amadasi Guzzo, *Le iscrizione fenicie e puniche delle colonie in occidente* (Rome: Istituto di studi del Vicino Oriente, Università, 1967), 96–97; cf. idem, "Une lamelle magique."

97 Pisano, *I gioielli fenici di Tharros nel Museo Nazionale di Cagliari* , Nr. 437; Hölbl, *Ägyptisches Kulturgut im phönikischen und punischen Sardinien*, 346, 349–50., Taf. 165/3, Abb. 58. See also Pisano, ibid., no. 170; Hölbl, *Ägyptisches Kulturgut*, 346, 351, Taf. 164/3, Abb. 59. For the second Thassos inscription, see Hölbl, *Ägyptisches Kulturgut*, 352–53, abb. 60.

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(an inscription, which, unfortunately, was never deciphered). Also at Malta, a Punic papyrus amulet has been found in a bronze capsule (6th cent. BCE) with a spell for protection. These, then, represent some examples of the Punic-Phoenician amulets that carry primary inscriptions for protection.[98]

The early Punic-Phoenician inscribed *lamellae* serve as a bridge spanning two traditional worlds in the cultural and historical development of the written amulet: on the one hand, the early Egyptian tradition with its veneration of the written word for the guidance and transferral of the soul into its next life, and on the other hand the later (Roman period) Greco-Egyptian tradition, whose adaptation of the use of gold and silver amulets for protective magic came to be applied more to the workaday world of everyday healing and medical therapy. In-between stood the widespread industry of manufacturing gold and silver sheet-metal for use in protective, 'Egyptianizing' spells that addressed both everyday, mundane functions like healing and the afterlife needs of the post-mortem world, as mediated by the oldest Egyptian beliefs.

The famous corpus of 'Orphic' gold leaves (to be addressed further below) comes to mind here—at least from an historical, if not conceptual, perspective, since they, too, date from an early period (although later than the gold Punic-Phoenician *lamellae*).[99] Dated primarily from the late 5th to around the 2nd century BCE, the 'Orphic-Dionysiac' *lamellae*, as they are often called, seem

98 Maltese amulets: T.C. Gouder, T.C. and B. Rocco, "Un talismano bronzeo da Malta contentente un nastro di papiro con iscrizione fenicia," *Studi magrebini* 7 (1975): 1–18. For further bibliography on the Maltese amulets see Kotansky, "Texts and Studies in the Graeco-Egyptian Magic Lamellae: An Introduction, Corpus, and Commentary on the Phylacteries and Amulets Principally Engraved onto Gold and Silver Tablets" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1988), 1. 71–73.

99 The Orphic "leaves" comprise a body of loosely related post-mortem texts found in graves throughout the ancient Greek world that can be divided into the following groups: 1) texts that preserve 1st-person proclamations of the deceased person's state of purity before infernal deities, like Persephone, with reminders of the reincarnational cycle of life that the soul had just endured, en route to the next world (group "A" texts); 2) texts that give instructions for the deceased in the afterlife, such as what netherworldly directions to take, and what 'passwords' to say before a set of guardians, in order to ensure safe passage to a blessed afterlife, after having drunk from a proper water-source (e.g., the Lake of Memory) (group "B" texts); 3) texts that preserve 3rd person statements of the blessed status of the deceased (employing imagery of wine and milk, or of banqueting), with proclamations that they have been redeemed before Persephone and/or Bacchios (group "D" texts); 4) texts only with greetings to the underworld gods, Plouton and Persephone (group "E"); and 5) texts mostly with the names of the initiate only (group "F"). A single, group "C" text is anomalous. See, on the texts, R.G. Edmonds III, ed., *The "Orphic" Gold Tablets and Greek Religion. Further Along the Path* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); A. Bernabé and A.I. Jiménez San Cristóbal, *Instructions for the Netherworld: the Orphic Gold Tablets*, RGRW 162 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008); F. Graf and S.I. Johnston, *Ritual*

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to originate in the Western Mediterranean, and look surprisingly like their Egyptian and Phoenician forebears (while addressing specifically Hellenic mortuary needs). Written as they are on gold *lamellae*, these leaves must owe at least their use of metals to contacts with western Phoenician commercial enterprises. With their own brand of afterlife spells that combine Greek mythology with Egyptian conceptual beliefs, the 'Orphic-Dionysiac' *lamellae* may be seen as spells and amulets in the tradition of the Pyramid Texts. Many of the newer, shorter texts preserve simple statements that the bearer of the gold leaf be "justified" or found "pious" before his, or her, divine interlocutors, statements that suggest some affinity with the older Egyptian amulet decrees that similarly pronounce justification for the wearer.[100] An intermediary example is the Greek text of a gold *lamella* of second-to-first-century BCE date that appears to protect its wearer, Abalala, in the Persian afterlife by stating, too, that he is similarly "justified" (*artāvan*).[101]

Recently, too, some scholars have pointed out similarities in the language of the Punic-Phoenician gold- and silver-strip amulets with specific wording of the biblical Psalms and later Jewish literature, especially, in respect of the contemporary Hebrew Ketef Hinnom silver amulets, discussed below.[102] Notable in this respect is the use of the verbs *šmr* ("protect") and *nṣr* ("guard") on the Carthage amulets, for this language corresponds to similarly paired verbs in the apotropaic Psalm 12:7–9.[103]

The sixth century BCE sees the increasing use of another metal, lead, in the Greek colonies of Sicily and Magna Graecia, that is, in an area of the Mediterranean where Greek and Punic cultures had long met head-to-head. But in this case the metal served as a medium for writing aggressive spells. Such early 'curse-tablets' (Gk. *katadesmoi*; Latin *defixiones*) are treated elsewhere in this Guide.[104] Examples of early Greek amulets on lead are extremely rare, but do exist (see below), and the use of lead for other ritual purposes

Texts for the Afterlife. Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2014).

100 Cf. Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*; Edmonds III, *The "Orphic" Gold Tablets and Greek Religion*; C. López-Ruiz, "Near Eastern Precedents of the "Orphic" Gold Tablets: The Phoenician Missing Link" *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 15 (2015): 52–90.

101 R. Kotansky, "A Gold *Lamella* for Blessed Abalala," *Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debreceniensis* 52 (2016): 7–20; cf. Graf and Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*.

102 Smoak, "Amuletic Inscriptions and the Background of YHWH."

103 At the conclusion of his article, Smoak, "Amuletic Inscriptions and the Background of YHWH," provides some additional literature on the use of apotropaic magical language in other Psalms, Qohelet, and the Book of Proverbs, not to speak of the later use of Psalms in magic.

104 See above, Eidinow, Chapter 15.

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can also be seen with the important corpus of oracle-questions from Dodona, the early sixth-century BCE letters from Berezan (in the Crimea), and on several early sacrificial calendars (*leges sacrae*), the most important being that from fifth-century BCE *Lex Sacra* from Selinous, in Sicily.[105] Lead—as well as gold foil—has also been attested for the writing of ancient Etruscan in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE: for example, in three widely publicized bilingual Punic-Etruscan dedicatory plaques unearthed at Pyrgi in 1964.[106]

5 Early Hebrew and Jewish Amulets

Around the beginning of the Roman period we find a prominent rise in the production of gold- and silver-foil *lamellae*, written not in Greek but Palestinian Jewish Aramaic and Hebrew. Although these amulets are not easily datable on paleographical grounds, they probably first appear around the time of their Greek counterparts and continue well into the early Byzantine Period. We will discuss the Greek *lamellae* further in the section below, on Roman-period amulets.

But even earlier than the Roman-era *lamellae* are a pair of silver-leaf amulets from excavations in 1979 at Ketef Hinnom in Israel. These twin amulets, dating to ca. 600 BCE, are thus roughly contemporary with the writing of Punic-Phoenician amuletic texts on strips of metal. As Gabriel Barkay, the original excavator and publisher of the tablets, states, these amulets contain the earliest citations of Biblical texts ever found, providing a version of the well-known Priestly Benediction of Numbers 6:24–26:

> [...] YHW[H] .. the great [... who keeps] the covenant and Graciousness toward those who love [him] and those who keep [his commandments ... ...]. the Eternal? [...]. [the?] blessing more than any [snare] and more than Evil. For redemption is in him. For YHWH is our restorer [and] rock. *'May YHWH bless you and* [*may he*] *keep you.* [*May*] *YHWH make* [*his face*] *shine ...'* (Num. 6:24f.).[107]

105 M.H. Jameson, D.R. Jordan, and R. Kotansky, *A* Lex Sacra *from Selinous*, Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Monographs 11 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).

106 See Giuliano Bonfante & Larissa Bonfante, *The Etruscan Language* (New York: NYU Press, 1983), 52–62.

107 Trans. based on G. Barkay, "The Priestly Benediction on Silver Plaques from Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem," *Tel Aviv* 19 (1992): 139–92; G. Barkay, M.J. Lundberg, A.G. Vaughn, and B. Zuckerman, "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 334 (2004): 41–71.

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The second of the two texts can be translated as follows:

> [For NN, (the son/daughter of—]*h/hu*. May he/she be blessed by YHWH, the warrior (or: helper) and the rebuker of Evil: *'May YHWH bless you, keep you. May YHWH make his face shine upon you and grant you peace'* (Num. 6:24–26).[108]

The tablets were found *in situ* in the repository of Chamber 25 in burial cave 25, in the Hinnom Valley near Jerusalem. The language of the texts and their burial contexts suggest that the two silver plaques were written to protect the wearer (whose name may be partially legible on the second of the two plates) as apotropaic amulets.[109] They thus serve the same function, and have much the same language, as the nearly contemporary Punic tablets,[110] as well as the later, Roman-period *lamellae*.[111] Some scholars have also noted the similarity of the Ketef Hinnom amulets to later *mezuzot* and *tefillin*, the enclosed verses used in Jewish tradition for blessing and protecting home and person.[112]

Another type of textual amulet of early Aramaic (if not Canaanite) pedigree are the twin 'Phoenician' incantations apparently found at Arslan Taş (Akkadian *Ḫadāttu*), near Aleppo, in Syria, in 1933. The first and most important of the two (Amulet No. 1) is a text written around and across a series of figured drawings on a pierced rectangle of limestone or gypsum– pierced so as to be suspended or worn. It is written in an Aramaic script, although the precise language of the tablet is debatable, given that it shows grammatical affinities with Phoenician but lexical kinship to Hebrew. A 'mixed dialect' or 'Canaanite' is best used to describe the language.[113]

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108 Trans. based on Barkay, "The Priestly Benediction," 139–92; Barkay et al., "The Amulets from Ketef Hinnon."

109 Barkay, "The Priestly Benediction," and Smoak, "Amuletic Inscriptions and the Background of YHWH."

110 Smoak, "Amuletic Inscriptions and the Background of YHWH."

111 The possibility of a secondary use of the plaques as amulets for the deceased could also inform the interpretation of these particular grave goods; see Berlejung, "There is nothing better than more!"

112 A. Lemaire, "Amulettes personelles et domestiques en phénicien et en hébreu (Ier millénaire av. N. É.) et la tradition juive des *tefillin* et *mezuzot*," in *Croyances popularizes. Rites et representations en Méditerranée orientale* (Athens: Université nationale et capodistrienne d'Athènes, 2008), 85–98; Y.B. Cohn, *Tangled Up In Text:* Tefillin *and the Ancient World* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008).

113 For the Arslan Tash amulets, see F.M. Cross and R.J. Saley, "Phoenician Incantations on a Plaque of the Seventh Century B.C. from Arslan Tash in Upper Syria," *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 197 (1970): 42–49; F.M. Cross, "A Second Phoenician Incantation Text from Arslan Tash," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36 (1974): 486–90; and

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The larger tablet (no. 1) measures 8.2 cm. × 6.7 cm. and is datable to around the seventh century BCE. It has been suggested that the size of this amulet was too large to be worn on the person (raising some questions about the tablets' authenticity). But this objection hardly seems justifiable, seeing it is not taller than 10 cm. in height; moreover, it may have been a house amulet, or an early Canaanite prototype of the Jewish *mezuzah*. The size of the stone does not militate against its being a personal amulet worn on the body, but the text suggests that it served as a personal house amulet rather than a charm to be worn on the body:

> **A** *Incantation for the Fliers. The Oath of* Ssm *son of* Pdr: *Take to him, and say to the Stranglers, 'The house* (*in which*) *I come, you* (f. pl.) *will not come*, **B** *and the courtyard* (*in which*) *I enter, you* (f. pl.) *will not enter. Aššur has made an eternal pact with us. He and all the divine beings have made it with us, and the leader*(*s*) *of the council of all our holy ones, by the oath of heaven and earth forever, by the oath of Baal,* [**C** …] *the Earth, by the oath of* […] **D** [*the*] *wife of Ḥawrān whose utterance is perfect, and her seven rival-wives, and the eighth, the wife of the holy master.* **E** *To the Fliers in the dark chamber: Pass by immediately this night!* **F** […] *in his house, hit the road!* **G** *I have denied access to the opening of his doorway, and will bring light to the doorpost. The Sun is rising, like the moth vanish, and forever fly away!'* [114]

The use of small inscribed amulets to protect houses would not have been uncommon in ancient times. Indeed, an early Greek example, written on a small folded sheet of lead and found in Selinous, Sicily, seems to have served just such a purpose, as will be discussed below.

6 Early Greek Amulets

We have already seen mention of a 'leaf' amulet in Plato's *Charmides* as well as other examples of 'semi-lettered' amulet rings. Early examples of the age-old, 'unlettered' variety of amulet find an unusually early expression in Greek literature, in Homer's *Odyssey* (19.457–59), where the sons of Autolykos check the bleeding of Odysseus' boar-wound by both binding the injury and chanting an

Faraone, *Transformation of Greek Amulets*, 208–9, with fig., after D. Pardee, "Les documents d'Arslan Tash: Authentiques ou faux?" *Syria* 75 (1998): 15–54.

114 Trans. based on C.G. Haberl, "Arslan Tas Amulet No. 1 (AT1)," unpublished.

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incantation (*epaoidē*) over it.[115] The bandage (assumed from the verb for 'binding' the wound) would have served as a kind of 'knotted' amulet in the style of the oldest Babylonian and Egyptian enchanted cords, mentioned above.

But as far as true 'lettered' amulets go in early Greece, we have to look to a number of lead tablets of Classical and Hellenistic date that have emerged over the years to find comparable examples. The most important of these would be the recently published 'Getty Hexameters', as well as the Phalasarna lead sheet from Crete.

The 'Getty Hexameters' preserve verse incantations on lead for the protection of one's individual household and for the city-state (*polis*) overall, all by citing an ancient *historiola* about a she-goat "with a tireless stream of excellent milk" that is led out of Persephone's garden to be milked.[116] There is telling evidence that the story apparently invoked through these verses for protection, salvation, and overall communal benefit might involve some mythic narrative about the creation of the Milky Way.[117] The re-enactment of this narrative is meant to provide an astral home for the beneficent dead in the nighttime skies. By re-telling this primordial act of creation, the *historiola* becomes a powerful symbol of the wholeness and integrity that cosmological order promises to the suffering individual in his home as well as to a city divided and broken by war, pain, sickness, and loss. The re-telling of the creation of the cosmos "in its own time" (*in illo tempore*) points to the possibility of supernatural intervention into the life of a world that is seemingly out of step with divine creation.[118] It is the same invocation of divine forces that we find in Herodotus (*Histories* 1.131), when we read that among the ancient Persians—following a sacrifice with prayers that "all may be well" with the people and their king—a certain "Magian man" (*magos anēr*) is said to stand by and pronounce a 'theogony' (i.e., a tale about the birth of the cosmos) as a magical incantation (*epaoidē*).

The Getty Hexameters enjoin the owner of the sacred verses (called "immortal words") to set the inscribed tablet in his own house: "Whosoever would enclose, in his house of stone, the notable letters of these sacred verses engraved on tin (even having spoken these immortal verses to mortals), as many things as the broad earth rears, shall not harm him, nor as many things as much-roaring Amphitrite [the sea-goddess] nourishes in the sea!" (ll.2–5).

115 Roy Kotansky, Joseph Naveh, and Shaul Shaked, "A Greek-Aramaic Silver Amulet from Egypt in the Ashmolean Museum," *Le Muséon* 105 (1992): 5–24.

116 D. Jordan and R. Kotansky, "Ritual Hexameters in the Getty Museum: Preliminary Edition," *ZPE* 178 (2011): 54–62; C. Faraone and D. Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera*; R. Kotansky, "Getty Hexameters," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary. Online Edition*, ed. Sander Goldberg (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016–2017).

117 Kotansky, "A Gold *Lamella* for Blessed Abalala," and Kotansky, "Getty Hexameters."

118 See Frankfurter, "Narrating Power."

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The sundry things that earth or sea are thought to produce indicate the host of baleful and harmful creatures that symbolize the numerous unpredictable dangers that confront humankind. In the kindred Phalasarna tablet various such animal forms are more explicitly aligned with harmful, even demonic, entities thought to attack the owner.[119]

As far as the development of written from oral charms is concerned, one notes the Getty Hexameters's constant juxtaposition of spells that are spoken to spells that are written. It seems that the Getty text was meant to represent an example of the intersection of the tradition of a wholly oral working of incantations with that of written magic. Its seems to indicate the gradual integration—and accommodation—of spoken magic into the relatively recent medium of written magic. (The Getty text dates to the late 5th century BCE, but derives from models centuries earlier). Thus we see the same interplay between incantation and written spell first encountered in the early Egyptian materials.

7 The Rise of Amulets in the Roman Period

From late Republican Rome to the blossoming of the Byzantine Orient, the Greek language served as the *lingua franca* of the Empire, proving particularly dominant in the social, commercial, and literary life of the eastern Mediterranean. Except for the Jewish-Aramaic *lamellae* from Syria and Palestine, most of our extant magical papyri, gems, and amulets, are all written in Greek.[120] Although there are numerous curse-tablets in Latin,[121] magical papyri in Latin are uncommon.[122]

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119 Faraone and Obbink, *Magika Hiera*, Appendix. An additional relevance of the Phalasarna text is the light it shines on the *Ephesia grammata*: though long-known from later sources, these "letters" are here quoted directly, whereas in the Getty verses they form meaningful sentences. See also below, Frankfurter, Chapter 23.

120 R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets. The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae*: Pt. I: Published Texts of Known Provenance, Papyrologica Coloniensia 22/1 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994) (henceforth, *GMA*); A silver amulet from Limonum (Poitiers, France) is partially in Latin (*GMA* I.8); one from Dierna, Rumania, of gold (*GMA* I.24), and one from Ripe San Ginesio, Italy (*GMA* I.31), are entirely in Latin, but prove difficult to read. A silver piece from Hungary is written in Greek, with magic names in Latin (*GMA* I.18); and another silver amulet from Badenweiler, Germany is Latin but wholly written with the Greek alphabet.

121 Cf. R.S.O. Tomlin, *Tabellae Sulis. Roman Inscribed Tablets of Tin and Lead from the Sacred Spring at Bath* (Oxford: Oxford University Commitee for Archaeology, 1998); A. Kropp, *Defixiones: Ein aktuelles Corpus lateinischer Fluchtafeln* (Speyer: Kartoffeldruck-Verlag Kai Broderson, 2008).

122 Cf. *Suppl. Mag*. I. 36.

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7.1 *The Range of Amulets in the Roman Period*

When we come to the manuals of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* we find that, although amulets of the 'unlettered' kind were still in continuous demand, it was the 'lettered' variety of amulets that now represented the work of a sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and belletristic élite. In a world in which people took as much pride in 'letters' as a reader in Periclean Athens once did, a choice talisman written on the best of gold or the finest of linen would serve for its owner as a cherished heirloom, valued equally for its cosmetic beauty as for its magical utility. It is for this reason that so many *lamellae* have been found buried with the deceased as precious grave-goods throughout the Roman Empire. By the time of Pliny (1st cent. CE) inscribed amulets were coming into widespread circulation, and we know that long formulas in Greek were being copied into books by at least the first century BCE—formulas actually composed considerably earlier (see further below).

Although Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus, ca. 23/24–79 CE) mentions in his extant writings mostly mineral amulets to be worn or attached to the body, in one instance he records an unusual reference to a written charm. The Roman consul, Marcus Servius Nonianus (consul in 35 CE), known personally to Pliny, was fearful of attacks of ophthalmia (eye-disease) and thus attached around his neck a slip of papyrus (*charta*) upon which were inscribed the Greek letters, *rho* (P) and *alpha* (A). This early lettered 'RA'-amulet, brief as it is, shows that written amulets were coming into vogue in Rome—probably at the same time that inscribed gemstones were growing in popularity. At the same time, however, the older unlettered amulets must have predominated, for in the next sentence Pliny records the fact that C. Licinius Mucianus (consul for the third time in 72 CE) would enclose a living fly inside a linen bag, for the same eye-complaint.[123]

A Latin gold *lamella* found near Picenum (mod. Ripe San Ginesio), written "for pain or distress of the eyes" (*ad oculo*(*rum*) *dolorem aut ang*(*orem*)),[124] addresses the same concern as that of consul Nonianus, above, but dates somewhat later (2nd cent. CE). Another gold *lamella*, dating to the generation before Pliny (probably to the "Augustan Period") and preserving a kind of "victory-charm," reworked to address post-mortem concerns in the Egyptian (or even "Orphic") manner, reads as follows: "Eternal worker, Lord Sarapis, give victory over the names written below," although no actual "names" are found on the rest of the intact tablet.[125] We might expect names identifying

123 Pliny, *Natural History,* 28.5.29.

124 *GMA* I.31.

125 *GMA* I.28.

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legal adversaries. But the "victory" in this case represented triumph over (now) *unnamed*, harmful netherworld beings or obstacles in the hereafter. The gold foil was found in the mouth of a skull within a terracotta urn that have been excavated from one of a number of *columbaria* found near the tomb of the Scipios, in the southern part of Rome. The gold *lamella* served as a kind of 'Charon's obol' placed in the mouth of the deceased to aid his crossing the mythological river Styx.

Another example, again from a necropolis near Rome, is in fact a late version (2nd–3rd cent. CE) of the early Greek "Orphic" *lamellae*, mentioned earlier, but this time it is clearly used as a personalized phylactery for the next life. It was engraved for its bearer, a named woman, Caecilia Secundina, who was most probably, of all people, the close relative of Pliny the Younger (viz., Caius Plinius Caecilius Secundus), the very nephew of our Pliny the Elder, just mentioned, who had raised him.[126] It seems that the world of magic in Pliny's Rome encompassed a rather small circle of social elite.

7.2 *Amulet Instructions in* PGM *VII: New Stages in the Use of Writing and Materials*

One of the Greek Magical Papyri offers an illuminating parallel to the written phylacteries that Pliny describes: British Museum *P. Gr.* CXXI (= *PGM* VII).[127] Although this third/fourth-century CE opisthographic roll (written on both sides) is not as early as the oldest formularies attested below, it provides evidence of the gathering up of prior texts into collections, including independent groupings of *phylaktēria* (protective spells). In columns 5–6 of this roll we find a subset of about fourteen short recipes, containing a number of apparent folk remedies not unlike those found in the works of Pliny and other Greco-Roman writers, recipes that require a limited amount of materials or of ritual enactments. They are clearly a series of traditional "household" formulas that have been rather loosely gathered together according to medical complaint. Following a short "favor and victory charm" requiring the foot of a gecko to be worn as an amulet[128] and a love-spell,[129] we read of the treatment of a variety of remedies for physical complaints: a spell for scorpion sting; for discharge of the eyes; for migraine; "another" (for migraine); a spell for coughs, followed by "another;" a spell for hardening of the breasts, accompanied by one for swollen

126 *GMA* I.27.

127 Preisendanz's corpus of "Greek Magical Papyri" should be recognized as a modern and artificial circumscription of Greco-Egyptian papyri: see above, Dieleman, Chapter 13.

128 *PGM* VII. 186–90.

129 *PGM* VII. 191–92.

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testicles; and lastly a series of three brief spells for fever (with another love-spell that falls between the second and third fever recipes).

What is interesting about these spells, in addition to their loose grouping by medical ailments, is that the short spells give instances of both the "unlettered" variety of amulet, and the "lettered" kind (or at least, "quasi-lettered"). This last category required the use of either engraved papyrus or metal as phylacteries. For example, the short recipe in *PGM* VII. 199–201, for migraine, reads simply, "Take oil in your hands and utter the spell, 'Zeus sowed a grape seed: it parts the soil; he does not sow it; it does not sprout.'" No writing, nor amulet of any kind, is required. This technique preserves only the "incantational" portion of a spell (like the old "Charmides"-amulet that Socrates was supposed to have uttered to cure headache). The magic verse, unlettered as it is, must be quite old and might point to a pre-literary stage of composition. Conversely, a spell for headache that immediately follows represents a clear step toward the lettered kind of amulet, for its text reads:[130] "Write these things on scarlet parchment: 'ABRASAX [sign]' (and add the usual formula). Place it, having made it into a plaster, on the side of the head." Now lettered, this phylactery is even more detailed in its application: the formula is indeed written, but in this case on parchment; and, like Plato's spell, it is applied like a poultice to the site of the pain itself. Further, it also has a simplicity to it that might reflect an older, folkloric pedigree. One might observe that parchment (unlike papyrus) comes from animal skins—farm animals, to be sure, and plainly the kind of domestic ungulates that a common agrarian householder in a pre-urban society might own.

Less easily procured, but clearly rural (if not 'wild'), are the hides of the hyenas needed for either of the two recipes for cough in our group of amulets.[131] Hyenas, probably the striped hyena (*hyaena hyaena*), whose range included Asia Minor and the Arabian Peninsula (in addition to Egypt and North Africa) were largely nocturnal animals that preyed on sheep, goat, donkey, and horses, and were dangerous even to humans. Since these hyena spells are to be written in black ink (the material that only letter-writers would have handy), there is a presupposed level of literary sophistication evident in the process of their manufacture. Interestingly, the second of the two spells require only the copying of a set of magical '*charaktēres*' (in letter-form) onto the skin.[132] The skin is then to be attached around the neck and worn, once it is dried out.

130 *PGM* VII. 201–2.

131 *PGM* VII. 203–7.

132 *PGM* VII. 206–7.

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In the first 'hyena' spell there is a remarkable variant reading embedded in the text: "*as I have found in another* [recipe] … (magic names), deliver [him], NN, from the cough that holds him fast."[133] This addition is an early editor's comment, whose identification (in the first person singular) matches no known name or colophon in the British Museum papyrus, and it suggests how old and redacted this short group of 'hyena'-spells must be. Moreover, this auxiliary spell itself shows a much higher level of sophistication in phylactery-production than the older spells with which it is juxtaposed. Its spell not only requires literacy, but its use of developed, stock language—language that can only be said to have become formulaic in the later spells dating from the second to fourth centuries CE—makes it nearly contemporary with the late compilation of the papyrus roll itself. The spell's variant reading, picked up in some manuscript by its anonymous redactor, suggests that the earlier spells, for which this is its variant, must be generations older.

A scorpion spell in the group requires symbols alone to be written onto a papyrus strip and wrapped around the sting area, reflecting an Egyptian context, since the malady of scorpion sting recalls the oldest of the Egyptian Coffin and Pyramid spells. Two other spells (*PGM* VII.197–198, VII.218–221) require brief recipes with only magic names to be written on the papyrus, while another has the fever-sufferer write the symbols for moon and sun on each side of an olive leaf, not papyrus (*PGM* VII.213–214). Finally, a so-called "Stele of Aphrodite" for friendship and success provides a lettered diagram as a design that is to be engraved with a bronze stylus onto a "tin leaf" (*petalon kassiterinon*).[134] We thus have, in this short collection of spells, the culmination of a long process, one that combines 'unlettered' assemblage with 'lettered' amulet; Egyptian milieu with Greek; and the use of papyrus with that of metal. The final spell is a Greek invocation of Aphrodite that is to be written on a *lamella* of tin—a metal whose mythological connections with the fabled Cassiterides Islands places it as far away from the sands of Egypt as is theoretically possible.

7.3 Materia Magica *of Roman-Era Amulets*

The flowering of lettered amulets in the Roman Empire from approximately the second through fifth centuries CE finds full expression in the three principal media used for writing magical amulets during this period: 1) gemstones; 2) papyri; and 3) metal *lamellae*, all media durable enough to pass onto us lasting corpora of magical texts. To be sure, all kinds of writing material continued to be used in the *ad hoc* manufacture of written amulets: inscribed linen,

133 *PGM* VII. 203–5.

134 *PGM* VII. 215.

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carved wood, bronze pendants, clay *tesserae*, ceramics, wax tablets, and so on. Nevertheless, the gemstones, papyri, and *lamellae* came to be the standard materials for inscribing texts on amulets. Permanence and beauty too were surely virtues to be sought in the artisanal production of amulets throughout the Roman Empire. Historically, the systematic output of metal phylacteries experiences a demonstrable rise in the second century CE, a period that also witnesses an increase in the making of both gemstone amulets and magical texts on papyrus.[135] Thereafter, the production of magical texts seems only to increase with the early innovation and creative freedom characteristic of the first to second centuries CE. The result is the development of a creative repertoire involving the use of stock formulations and stereotypical language.

Clearly the making of amulets had blossomed into a full-fledged business enterprise, spreading throughout the breadth and length of the Empire. Inscribed magical *lamellae* have been recovered from as far west as Caernarvon in Wales and as far east as Bostra in Arabia. They have been unearthed in the Crimean Peninsula, on the north shores of the Black Sea, and as far south as Ballana, in Nubia. Much the same can be said of the gemstones, when their find-spots can be determined. Magical papyri, dependent upon the dry sands of Egypt for their survival, have not been found outside of desert climates;[136] but if the discussion of Plato's amulet and Pliny's text are any indication, magical papyri would have been as widely diffused as were the extant metal and gemstone amulets. The texts and stereotypical formulas of the *lamellae*, with few exceptions, do not show any appreciable regional differences from what we know of amulets from the papyri of Egypt.

7.3.1 Gemstones

Gemstones (which are treated more fully in Chapter 17) can trace their ancestry to the uninscribed Babylonian gemstone amulets valued for the powers inherent in their minerals and to the inscribed Mesopotamian Lamaštu amulets. Egyptian forebears also provide useful analogies in the inscribed scarabs and in other pendants, whose deities in various forms (usually theriomorphic) offered useful models for the rich iconography of the Roman period gems: Sarapis, Isis, Harpocrates, Osiris, Ptah, the Pantheos deity, and other Egyptian gods are already well-documented by the first century BCE / first century CE, along with a growing pantheon of Greek deities. Horus and Horus-falcon motifs on a

135 Cf. *GMA* I, p. xviii.

136 See above, Dieleman, Chapter 13, and Van der Vliet, Chapter 14.

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handful of gems even occur as early as the late Ptolemaic period, too.[137] By the first century CE, we begin to see the occasional use of *voces magicae* on gems with both Egyptian and Greek iconographic motifs.[138] Such formulas are often distinctive words, unique to the gems (e.g. *Chnoubis, Kanthesoule, Ororiouth*, etc.), but many too are found on the *lamellae* and papyri, which share the same system of angel-names, vowels, and '*charaktēres*.'

In any event, such formulas predominate on the gems by the second century CE, and at this time we encounter whole texts from formularies that have been copied onto gemstones, as if they were intended for papyrus amulets or *lamellae*. These longer spells, whose study would require a separate treatment, may result from an 'accident of economy': there are no preserved instructions for writing longer spells onto gems. In fact, surprisingly little about the magic gems, widespread as they are, can be gleaned from the papyrus handbooks themselves.[139] However, what we have learned from the earlier Egyptian amulets may be particularly instructive here: sections of the *Book of the Dead* were copied, per their own instructions, onto such media as scarabs and stylized 'heart amulets' of stone, so that it is easy to envision how these amulets may have provided conscious models for the longer Greco-Roman healing spells copied onto semi-precious gems.

Applying our earlier taxonomic categories we can see that the gemstones largely belong to the **semi-lettered** kind, with iconographic representations predominating over letters. The earliest examples of stones used as amulets carry no words, but their emblems are a form of communication that links them to the older pendant and scarab-amulets of the Egyptians. An Imperial-period jasper engraved with an elaborate *uḏjat*-eye (and ringed with an *ouroboros* serpent) but with no inscription, is representative of the carry-over of a purely Egyptian magical valuation onto an early Roman period amulet.[140] Still vital in the Roman period gems, as also in the pure metals of the *lamellae*, are the values of the stones themselves, whose amuletic properties go back to the unengraved Babylonian *abnu*-necklaces that are irradiated by the stars. Thus, the gemstones can be seen to operate on a number of 'magical' levels: 1) the quartz that constitutes the gem-material itself (mostly crystals, chalcedonies, and jaspers); 2) the religious iconography and symbology that they

137 H. Philipp, *Mira et Magia. Gemmen im Ägyptichen Museum der Staatlichen Museen. Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin-Charlottenburg* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern 1986), nos. 1, 2, 4, etc.

138 Philipp, *Mira et Magia*.

139 M. Smith, "Relations between Magical Papyri and Magical Gems," *Papyrologica Bruxellensia* 18 (1979): 129–36.

140 Philipp, *Mira et Magia*, no. 7; cf. also no. 8, with the goddess Hathor in a naiskos.

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bear; 3) whatever accompanying text that may have been engraved upon them (whether single names or longer incantations); and lastly, 4) whatever ritual acts that were required to imbue the gem with powers (e.g., incantation, consecration, immersion, etc.).[141]

As the gemstone texts began to carry longer spells, and thus can be seen to overlap with the function of true **lettered** amulets, the values of (1), (2), and even (4) could be expected to wane dramatically. Instructions rarely require that those texts meant to be inscribed on amulets were also to be ritually chanted—although a special ritual in *PGM* IV.1596–1715 is written to consecrate (*telein*) a phylactery; and a multi-purpose operation using three verses from Homer mentions immersing (*baptein*) an iron *lamella*, along with other rites of consecration (*kathierōsis*).[142] Such rites, however, are rare in the papyri. It is possible that the manner of ritualizing an uninscribed 'Charmides' amulet for its specific purpose by chanting over it may have begun to pass into desuetude.

7.3.2 Papyri

The treatment of individual papyrus amulets would take us too far afield from this overview, so suffice it to say that one must distinguish foremost between *instructions* for writing amulets found in the longer papyrus handbooks and the actual, individual *amulets* on papyrus that have been composed and used in real life. One easy way of distinguishing the two, is to take notice that actual amulets will often carry the personal name of the individual for whom the amulet is written; the formulary handbooks, on the other hand, will simply carry the stock-phrases, '[e.g., protect] *so-and-so*' [= NN] (Gk. *deina*), or, '[e.g. insert] the common matters' (*koina*), with the understanding that the private information relevant to the personalized amulet would be added at the time of composition. Often, however, in the 'applied' versions of the amuletic spell—whether on a gemstone, papyrus, or *lamella*—some of the instructional materials in the handbooks that stood adjacent in the text to the actual spell get accidentally copied onto the applied amulet. Such textual curiosities prove to us that the manufacture of written amulets depended upon the kind of papyrus handbooks we do in fact possess.[143] A relevant example from a copper or bronze *lamella* from Acre (Sicily) preserves the instructions, "make [the] spell on a gold leaf … [one must] make an offering of myrrh with frankincense…."[144] Another, a silver *lamella* with a Solomonic exorcism (from Egypt), gives the

141 See C. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets*.

142 *PGM* IV. 2145–2240.

143 See above, Dieleman, Chapter 13, and Van der Vliet, Chapter 14.

144 *GMA* I. 32, 6–7.

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rubric, "in the middle of the Seal of Solomon are the demons," when in fact, the seal contains an archaic rendering of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton.[145] None of these details, whether ritual or rubric, were supposed to have been written onto the metal amulets. In fact, the instructions on the Acre amulet properly call for the making of a gold, *not* a bronze, *lamella*, showing the degree of textual misappropriation in this example. The mismatch of metals also recalls the Getty Hexameters' mention of tin, although the amulet itself is on lead. Such examples could be duplicated many times in the magical literature.

The earliest papyrus formularies date from the first century BCE, or possibly earlier, with several more dating to the late first century BCE or early first century CE.[146] These formularies are rather fragmentary and do not mention the actual writing of *phylaktēria*, although they surely must have included them at one time.[147] Already in the first century CE, we find *voces magicae* embedded in the formulas, as well as the *koina* and other, stereotypical formulas. A full standardization, however, does not occur until around the third century CE. Nonetheless, these early dates for ritual formularies correspond to the first century BCE rise of magic gemstones and *lamellae* (see below) and so point to a kind of efflorescence in Greco-Egyptian magical composition already in the pre-Augustan period.

Although actual papyrus amulets that have been found in Egypt treat a variety of physical complaints (scorpion sting, rheumy eyes, inflammation, etc.), fever amulets seem far to out-weigh all other problems combined.[148] This predominance may be explained by the fact that malarial fever—the most likely 'fever' for which a costly amulet would be written[149]—may have been more endemic to the Nile region than other amulet-producing areas. The papyrus amulets from Egypt, unlike the *lamellae*, routinely describe a more complex nosology (study of disease) of pyretic affliction that would appear to recognize a specific, almost clinical, periodicity of malarial fever. Lists of fever complaints on papyrus amulets often serialize the malady in a descending order of periodicity: quartan fever (occuring in 72 hour intervals); tertian fever (48 hour intervals); semitertian (24 hour), and quotidian fever (daily), etc.

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145 D. Jordan and R. Kotansky, "IV. Magisches. 338. A Solomonic Exorcism," in *Kölner Papyri* (*P. Köln*), ed. M. Gronewald, K. Maresch, and C. Römer (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 53–69.

146 *Suppl.Mag.* II.71 (1st century). Cf. *Suppl. Mag.* II. 70, potentially earlier, dated to 2nd–1st century BCE. Others at turn of millennium: *Suppl. Mag.* II. 72, 73.

147 A fragmentary second-century CE formulary, *Suppl. Mag.* II. 74, 9, prescribes writing an amulet on a tin *lamella*, possibly for sciatica.

148 *PGM* XVIII.1–7; XXXIII.1–25; *Suppl.Mag.* I. nos. 2–4; 9–14; 18–19; 21–23, 25; 28–29; 31, 34–35; see Kotansky, "Amulets," 63a.

149 Cf. L. Lidonnici, "Burning for It: Erotic Spells for Fever and Compulsion in the Ancient Mediterranean World," *GRBS* 39 (1998): 63–98.

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A representative example from the third-to-fourth-century CE Fayum (?), shows how many of these terms can come together in a single spell.[150] Following an invocation of divine names and Jewish angels, we read, "Protect Touthous, whom Sara bore, from all 'chills' and fever: tertian, quartan, quotidian, daily, or every-other-day," etc.[151] Unbeknownst to the ancients, but particularly instructive in our current understanding of medicine, was the fact that this observational nosology matches our modern understanding of malarial etiology. The dangerous parasitic protozoa, *Plasmodia*, carried by the female *Anopheles* mosquito whose bite transmits the disease, exists in four different species, yielding our four types of malarial fever. Malaria caused by *P. falciparum, P. vivax*, and *P. ovale* is of the tertian variety (48 hour), with *P. falciparum* being the most debilitating variety (it is often deadly), whereas malaria caused by *P. malaria* is of the quartan kind (72 hour-recurrence). Even with the less deadly varieties, malaria (especially *P. vivax* and *P. ovale*) can prove to be overtly chronic, visiting the victim unexpectedly after long periods of abeyance. It is no wonder, then, that so many of the Egyptian papyrus amulets were written to ward off this dangerous and deadly disease, whose characteristic high fever, 'chills' (*rigos*), and enfeebling headaches (*kephalargia*) also accompany the descriptions in the papyri (cf. also *rigopyretos*, 'chills-and-fever'). The *lamellae*, by contrast, treat fever only rarely and never mention the 'malarial' specifications.[152]

7.3.3 *Lamellae*

At the height of the Roman Empire, and well into late antiquity, small amulets made of thinly hammered gold or silver sheets—those we call *lamellae* in modern nomenclature—and engraved with a sharp stylus with verbal formulas and incantations, came into popularity as one of the most common forms of protective charms. An initially published corpus of approximately sixty-eight *lamellae*, with mostly Greek inscriptions, represents only a fraction of the known corpus of these kinds of amulets.[153] About half as many again, in Palestinian Jewish Aramaic and Hebrew, have also been recovered from Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and the Negev (when their findspots are known).[154] In both corpora of texts there are also examples in copper and bronze.[155]

150 *Suppl. Mag.* I.10.

151 *Suppl. Mag* I.27.

152 See *GMA* I.32, I.56, I.59.

153 See in general *GMA*.

154 J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations from Late Antiquity* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985).

155 Some published bronze *lamellae* may in fact be misidentified copper that has tarnished green. It seems that an unstated requirement of such amulets was that they be engraved

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While there are numerous important cultural overlaps between the Greco-Roman *lamellae* and their Jewish Aramaic and Hebrew counterparts,[156] the Jewish amulets in Palestinian Aramaic are grounded in a distinctively Jewish type of learned piety and theological outlook.[157] Besides showing a greater reliance upon a Torah-based ideology, a more developed angelology, and a monotheistic theology, the Jewish Aramaic amulets depend more upon writing out long, meaningful texts that contain a discrete type of exorcistic language than upon strings of magic names, symbols, or arcane language to convey their therapeutic powers.[158]

There is also much Greek influence in these Jewish spells, not the least of which is the borrowing of Greek medical terminology. A bronze (or copper?) amulet from Ḥorvat Kannah,[159] for example, uses the previously mentioned 'malarial' language in describing the fever to be exorcised from its patient: "An amulet proper to expel the great / fever and the tertian (fever) and the chronic (?) fever / and the semi-tertian (fever) … / from the body of Simon, / son of Kattia."[160] Here, however, the familiar Greek terms are merely spelled out, phonetically, using Hebrew letters that have become loan-words in Aramaic. The language of the spell is markedly exorcistic: the fever is to be *expelled* and ritually *driven out* of the body of the patient, as if the spirit of fever were being exorcised. Indeed, the fever itself is specifically referred to as an evil spirit to be expelled. This demonological world-view in Jewish amulets and its corresponding traditions of exorcism call for a separate study that considers these amulets together with references to exorcism in the Qumran scrolls and Jewish exorcistic texts associated with the name of Solomon.[161]

The ritual handbooks routinely mention the engraving of a gold, silver, or tin 'leaf' (*lepis, petalon*, or *lamna* = Latin *lamina*) to be deposited ritually or worn (*periaptein*) as an amulet (*periamma*), once it has been inserted into

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on a 'pure', that is unalloyed, earth metal (i.e., Au, Ag, Cu, Pb, Sn). Lead (Pb) was usually reserved for writing curse-tablets and other forms of aggressive magic, although later examples of Christian exorcisms on lead are known as well (*GMA*, xvi).

156 This includes bilingual cases: Kotansky, Naveh, and Shaked, "A Greek-Aramaic Silver Amulet from Egypt in the Ashmolean Museum"; *GMA* 1.56.

157 See above, Bohak, Chapter 16.

158 Kotansky, "Greek Exorcistic Amulets."

159 Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, A 19.

160 Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, A 19, line 1–3. 5–6, pp. 62–63.

161 Cf. e.g. Jordan and Kotansky, "IV. Magisches. 338. A Solomonic Exorcism"; Kotansky, "Demonology," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. C.A. Evans and S.E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 269–73. See also R. Boustan and M. Beshay, "Sealing the Demons, Once and For All: The Ring of Solomon, the Cross of Christ, and the Power of Biblical Kingship," *ARG* 16 (2014): 99–129.

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a tubular case (*solēnarion*), of which many examples have survived, with or without their *lamellae*. In one example, a silver 'leaf' with a hundred-lettered magical name is to be suspended from a thong of ass-hide.[162] In another case, a silver leaf as a phylactery is needed for a dangerous rite, along with one written on limewood (against demons), using vermilion ink, but to be enclosed in purple (or 'Phoenician') hide (*phoinikinos derma*).[163]

The tubular amulet capsules often used to enclose magical *phylaktēria* appear regularly on the Egyptian 'Fayum portraits', dating from the early first century to the fourth century CE.[164] The evidence of these portraits also adds considerably to our knowledge of the use of magic *lamellae* during the Principate and later Roman Empire to protect the deceased, as well as the living. The encaustic paint on an example of at least one such portrait preserves enough detail of the artist's fine strokes to show an inscription (Aramaic?) copied onto the outside of the amuletic tube.[165]

7.3.4 The *Lamellae* and the Combination of Cultural Heritages in the Roman Empire

In the corpus of published *lamellae* it is sometimes the simplest texts that suggest a carry-over of old Egyptian ritual practices, beliefs, and even language, into the larger body of Greek language amulets written on gold or silver. Indeed, it is justifiable to describe the whole complex of the Greek Magical Papyri, gemstones, and amulets, as 'Greco-Egyptian'; and it is only a matter of time before the complete maturation of cross-cultural approaches to the study of 'magic' recognizes the profound indebtedness of Greek ritual practices and lore to its Egyptian forebears. To be sure, ancient Near Eastern traditions are also present, as Faraone has noted, as well as Jewish and Semitic traditions (especially in the complex angelology), just as older Greek ritual material and religion is also found embedded in the magical texts of the Greco-Roman period.

To provide an example of a simple text rich in Egyptian heritage, one need only look to the short text of a tiny gold leaf, found at Eboracum (York), England, perhaps in an ancient bath-house, in 1839.[166] The third-to-fourth-century CE gold *lamella*, folded once from top to bottom, carries one line of *charaktēres* along with a second line preserving a single magical name in Greek letters: PHNEBENNOYTH. The name is adopted from ancient Egyptian,

162 *PGM* IV.258–260.

163 *PGM* IV. 2695–2705.

164 See K. Parlasca, *Mumienportäts und verwandte Denkmäler* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1966), with approx. 23 examples; Faraone, *Transformation of Greek Amulets*, 48–50.

165 Parlasca, *Mumienportäts*, no. 1.

166 *GMA* I.1.

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corresponding roughly to, *p3 nb* (*n*) *n3 ntr. w*, "the lord of the gods" (or, perhaps, the "lord of the Abyss"). Although not found in a tomb, this amulet may have served as a post-mortem protective spell, like those of the Pyramid Texts, and later Egyptian spells. Alternately, it might have served as a day-to-day protective amulet. A similar example that appears to use Greek letters to write old, or lost, Egyptian textual material is found on a small gold leaf from Athens.[167] Apart from a final name, POSEDAEN (Poseidon?), we have a group of syllables that appear to be Egyptian: *panchouchi* = *p3-n-kkw*, "he of the darkness"; *peto*(*tesia*) = *p3-di-* (*?*), "the one given by (-); (*e*)*nepherōs* = *nfr-hr*, "of perfect face/visage"; and *pan pemam* = *p3-n-p3 mm*, "he who belongs to the *doum*-palm." All these epithets and the Egyptian priestly context in which they once made sense, suggest an amulet that had once been buried to carry the deceased safely into the hereafter.[168]

Another short spell, also folded just once in the middle, comes from a provenance that suggests an afterlife application.[169] But this time the divine names derive from a Jewish background: a short 'magic alphabet' in the upper half of the spell, followed by the names *Iaō Athōnai Iō Iō*, in the lower—variations of the secret names of the Jewish God, Yahweh, Adonai. The archaeological context is then telling: the tablet was found in a third-to-fourth-century CE grave at ancient Dierna, Romania. In a brick sarcophagus containing a lead coffin, the skeletal remains of a small child were found; and upon the child's breast-bone rested this talisman, folded up in the manner of the older Greek 'Orphic' *lamellae*. In addition to minor grave goods, including a pair of gold earrings, there were also found an engraved red jasper and a Republican-era denarius depicting the sun-god, *Sol*, riding in his *quadriga* (a four-horse chariot). The presence of the Sun-God (R'e = Helios) in a quadriga belongs to standard funeral symbology: the chariot is meant as a conveyance of the soul into the next life, just as the Sun-God, R'e in Egyptian theology represents the supreme ruler of the afterlife, having been completely assimilated to Osiris, ruler of the netherworld.

A gold tablet in Greek found in Ballana, Nubia (3rd–4th century CE), is exemplary for showing a richly mythological text of Egyptian pedigree, something not unexpected given its location but rare in the corpus of magical *lamellae*. The spell addresses love and fertility, not medical prophylaxis. It remains to be fully mined for its rich lore of old liturgical language. Its text reads as follows:

167 *GMA* I. 42, 2nd century CE?

168 Cf. E.g., Coffin Text, 1136, line 482, with mention of "Ḥu who speaks in darkness," and the phrase, "I encountered the *dom*-palm"; Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffins Texts*, III, 173.

169 *GMA* I.23.

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> Come to me Isis, because I am Osiris your male brother. These are the waters that I offer you: it is the water of the Falcon (= Horus), (that) of the little breasts of Isis, (and) the water of Anubis. Brother Phneth-ben. Be on your back (and) open our womb in this hour, in this moment, and receive quickly the water sown in you, in your name Isis, mistress, queen of Dendera; now, quickly, quickly; through your power, quickly.[170]

Among *lamellae* that address afterlife expectations one also finds the late "Orphic" gold *lamella* of Caecilia Secundina, mentioned above, that dates to the second or third century CE. This spell is remarkable in several respects. It is almost six hundred years removed from its oldest analogues, like the Hipponion 'Orphic-Bacchic' gold leaf (ca. 400 BCE). We have already alluded to these early Greek "Netherworld passes" earlier in our historical survey. Unlike the other "Orphic" leaves, far removed from our late Roman example, this one has its hexametric formulas adapted to include the name of its bearer. The most recent edition of this artifact provides the following translation: "She comes pure from the pure ones, O Queen of them below, Eukles and Eubouleus: Zeus's splendid child! But I have this gift of Memory, famous for men. Caecilia Secundina, go, since you have become divine according to the law."[171] Zuntz, who examined the Egyptian background behind the mythology of the older "Orphic" tablets, noted that the writing of the actual name on the tablet follows the standard practice of Roman period amulets. What has not been noted, however, is that the Greek of the final phrase with its noun *nomō* in the dative case (line 5), viz. "go … *by law*" (or, … "according to the law"), has probably been misunderstood, all along. If accented differently, viz. *nomṓi*, rather than *nómōi*, we arrive at an entirely different interpretation, no doubt the preferred one (ancient inscriptions did not write accents): instead of the usual, "Go *by law* (*nómos*) having become divine," we can now read the text as, "Go to the *pasture* (*nomós*), Caecilia Secundina, having become divine." This pasture, or grassy area, is a synonym for the variety of pastures, groves, or plains found in the Greek mythological tradition representative of Persephone's garden; they are sacred areas to which the deceased initiate arrives, the metaphorical heavenly resting places for the soul's final sojourn in the afterlife. Ultimately, this grassy area, whatever its nomenclature, can be traced back to an origin in the blessed Fields of Rushes, and similar landmarks,

170 *GMA* I.61, p. 362.

171 *GMA* I.27, p. 108.

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that belong to the oldest traditions of Egyptian afterlife beliefs—fields that await the justified soul, once it has successfully crossed over into the realms of the beneficent dead.

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CHAPTER 20

Building Ritual Agency: Foundations, Floors, Doors, and Walls

Andrew T. Wilburn

In the early first century CE, Germanicus, the nephew of the emperor Tiberius and the hero of the German frontier, died in Antioch under mysterious circumstances connected to a feud with the governor of the province, Gnaeus Calpurius Piso, and his wife, Plancina.[1] According to Tacitus, writing a century later, various objects were discovered beneath the floor and in the walls of the room:

> the remains of human bodies, spells, curses, lead tablets engraved with the name Germanicus, charred bat blood-smeared ashes and other implements of magic (*aliaque malefica*) by which, it is believed, the soul of a person can be devoted to the powers of the grave.[2]

Germanicus had been ill, recovered briefly, and then died. Back in Rome, Piso was tried in absentia; the charges included allegations that he had killed

1 I am grateful to David Frankfurter and Henk Versnel for their support and encouragement. I also would like to thank my research students at Oberlin College, particularly Gabriel Baker ('08), Ploy Keener ('09), Christopher Motz ('09), and Eush Tayco ('09) for their assistance in preparing this manuscript. Elisabeth Edgar's assistance was critical as I acquired illustrations. John Harwood, my colleague in Art History at Oberlin College, now at the University of Toronto, provided significant insight into the idea of architecture, and suggested a sizable reading list. I wish to acknowledge the Thomas F. Cooper '78 Endowed Classics Faculty Support Fund and the Jody L. Maxmin '71 Classics Department Faculty Support Fund, which provided extensive support for field research and for acquiring the images that illustrate this essay.

2 Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.69, trans. G. Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), no. 13. Writing even later, in the third century CE, Dio Cassius reports similar magical practices: "Human bones had been buried in the house where he was living and lead sheets bearing curses with his name were found while he was still alive." (Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 57.18.9, trans. Earnest Cary, Loeb Classical Library 175 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924)).

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Germanicus by means of *devotiones* and *venenum*, imprecations and poison, shorthand in Rome for illicit ritual activity.[3]

The mechanics of directing hostile forces against Germanicus were twofold: (1) tablets were inscribed with the victim's name and (2) these objects were placed in a space that he inhabited. The inclusion of Germanicus' name ensured that the ritual effect of the deposition, which also included other powerful and profane objects and materials, would be focused against the imperial prince.[4] The efficacy of the ritual act was ensured through proximity; the objects were placed within the space Germanicus occupied, compromising the sanctity and safety of the (temporary) residence. Ancient individuals frequently went to great lengths to ensure that a structure was safe—the building should provide protection from weather as well as more sinister forces, such as ghosts, demons, and other denizens of the spirit world. And it was to these ends that people enacted rites and employed power objects to protect and safeguard the places where human beings lived and interacted, including both private structures and public buildings. It is possible to identify ritual processes as well as material treatments aimed at preserving the sanctity of spaces at all stages of a building's life.

Recognizing ritual activity in the past requires the close analysis of a range of sources. Textual records, including literature, religious treatises, and instructional manuals, can supply detailed records of idealized rites, often naming the actors and defining their roles. Such texts, however, address a specific time and place, and cannot necessarily be read backwards in time; many of our most detailed sources date from the Graeco-Roman periods. In contrast, the archaeological evidence of building construction derives from a variety of periods. In these cases, we sometimes must posit ritual behavior from silent remains, a process that requires us to infer intentionality. The discovery of material evidence in significant locations associated with the built structure, such as beneath the foundation, or at a doorway, can suggest that individuals

3 Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.13.2; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, 11.187; cf. W. Eck, "Die Wasserversorgung im römischen Reich," in *Die wasserversorgun antiker Städte*, ed. G. Garbrecht (Mainz: von Zabern, 1991), 154–55; C. Damon, "The Trial of Cn. Piso in Tacitus' Annals and the "Senatus Consultum De Cn. Pisone Patre": New Light on Narrative Technique," *The American Journal of Philology* 120 (1999): 156–57; J.B. Rives, "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime," *Classical Antiquity* 22 (2003): 321; M.W. Dickie, "Magic in the Roman Historians," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, RGRW 168, ed. R.L. Gordon and F. Marco Simón (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 96–99.

4 R.L. Gordon, "Showing the Gods the Way: Curse Tablets as Deictic Persuasion," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1 (2015): 156–57.

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purposefully deposited the artifacts or other materials in this space.[5] Such objects may be distinct material components of ritual that have been reified through gesture, such as plants or animals that are offered, consumed, or manipulated, or artifacts and decorative schema that are created, employed, or destroyed.[6]

The current discussion will proceed thematically, rather than historically, and will analyze each component of a building across the cultures of the Mediterranean. Special attention will be paid to the material evidence and to identifying potential ritual processes as suggested by literary sources and archaeological context. Additional, ritual safeguards were useful at each stage of construction because there was always a risk of failure—foundations could be set wrongly, walls could be misaligned, or roofs improperly supported. Even after the construction was completed, an edifice remained porous—people and animals, as well as spirits, ghosts, and demons, could enter the structure at various points, and ritual assistance countermanded the threats posed by these potentially hostile visitors. Despite the precautions taken by builders and residents, architectural devices were flexible, and the same features meant to protect the inhabitants could be employed by practitioners for aggressive aims.

1 On Building

Pollio Vitruvius, a first century BCE architect and military engineer under Julius Caesar, provided a decidedly Greco-Roman assessment of the genesis of building in his treatise, *De Architectura*. According to Vitruvius, the human discovery of fire, spontaneously created by tree branches rubbing together, led first to language and then to architecture: "Some in the group (of humans) began to make coverings of leaves, others to dig caves under the mountains. Many imitated the nest building of swallows and created places of mud and twigs where they might take cover."[7] Vitruvius' earliest humans began to build through a desire for shelter against the elements, and protection against heat and cold. Gottfried Semper, echoing Vitruvius but writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, characterized a building as comprised of the roof,

5 A.T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus and Spain* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2012), 40–50.

6 D. Frankfurter, "Female Figurines in Early Christian Egypt: Reconstructing Lost Practices and Meanings," *Material Religion* 11 (2015): 190–223; R.A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 248.

7 Vitruvius, *De architectura*, 2.1.

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the enclosure, and the foundation, all intended to surround the hearth.[8] The cultures of the Mediterranean developed and expanded these forms (foundation, enclosure and roof), which gave rise to temples, palaces, and complex administrative buildings. Within each edifice, the memory of the simple structure—the house or hut, meant to protect and shelter its inhabitants—remained central.[9]

The use and function of a building does not derive from its construction but rather is determined through the act of dwelling, the frequent or occasional activities performed by residents in particular rooms or areas within a building.[10] Conversely, a building's style is culturally and ideologically determined, and its interior and exterior spaces can be read as an expression of the residents' understanding of the world.[11] The material culture associated with architecture can illuminate the actual events that occurred within a space as well as the ideal or intended use for which a space was created or differentiated. Put a different way, archaeological evidence can demonstrate both what was supposed to happen within a building, i.e. the protection of the residents or the glorification of a divinity, as well as what actually did happen, such as cooking or sleeping.

In the context of construction, refurbishment or daily use, a ritual celebrant may act to ensure that a resident or visitor will remain safe or conversely, suffer some harm. Often, for the modern investigator, the ritual element may serve no functional purpose and may be extraneous to the structural soundness of the building. Ritual practices and decoration could impact each of the elements of architecture—power objects can be deposited beneath the house as part of the foundation, constructed into the surface of walls and floors, or crown the building as part of the roof. Beneath, around and above, ritual activity reinforces and even realizes the utilitarian function of each architectural element. The visible components of architecture are often enlivened through decoration, but this may fulfill a practical as well as aesthetic purpose. Inscriptions,

8 G. Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 102.

9 G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 6; J. Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972), 183.

10 M. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to the Task of Thinking (1964)* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 335.

11 M. Parker Pearson and C. Richards, "Architecture and Order: Spatial Representation and Archaeology," in *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space*, ed. M. Parker Pearson and C. Richards (London: Routledge, 1994), 59; P. Bourdieu, "The Berber House or the World Reversed," in *Interpretive Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. J. Thomas (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000), 496–97.

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carving, and painting were believed to supplement or create functionality within a given architectural element, so that a decorative feature would reinforce the technical purpose of a building component. Such an efficacious enhancement cannot be divorced from the element that it adorns. Through decoration and ritual enactments, the builder, ritual specialist, or resident could infuse the building with their own desires, integrated in the structural components.

2 Preparing the Site

In antiquity, as in contemporary real estate, location was critical. Functional reasons, such as proximity to natural resources or to similar buildings, likely played a significant role in determining where a building was sited. The process of building was often lengthy, and rituals employed at one site might not be undertaken at another. Furthermore, our record of these events is incomplete; we often lack accurate literary accounts that answer the questions we pose, and the archaeological record only rarely preserves organic matter. The actions undertaken prior to construction may have served a multitude of purposes—to find an appropriate place for construction, to consecrate or purify a site, or to determine how a new edifice or even town should be oriented.

Contemporary inscriptions and a small number of ritual texts that are Seleucid-era copies of earlier documents provide evidence for these ceremonies that preceded construction in Mesopotamia. Patrons demonstrated an affinity for maintaining continuity in ritual spaces, and many temples were constructed on the remains of other, older sanctuaries. Ritual experts were even employed to discover earlier religious foundations upon which the new temple might be constructed. A Seleucid text, for example, includes prescriptions for a rite to appease the deity of the earlier temple and to smooth the transition between successive buildings.[12] Nabonidus (556–539 BCE) illustrates the desirability of ritual continuity; when he built the Harbor Temple at Ur, he first constructed a temple in a large pit, filled it with clean sand, and built a new temple on top of the ready-made sacred space.[13] If a suitable space was unavailable, a pristine ritual area could be created. At the Temple Oval at

12 O.174, Seleucid text from Warka: F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1921), 9, obv. 1–2, 13–16, quoted in R.S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 184, appendix A, text 43.

13 L. Woolley and M.E.L. Mallowan, *The Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 38–40.

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Khafajah, the entire area contained within the enclosure wall was excavated to a depth of eight meters and filled with clean sand.[14]

In Egypt, cosmological symbolism determined the orientation and many of the features of the temple. These religious buildings were typically constructed under the aegis of the king, who may or may not have been present, and the symbolism of the temple was directly related to the necessity of maintaining cosmic order.[15] The temple was typically laid out on an east-west axis, often perpendicular to the Nile, the river which provided Egypt with life. Prior to the construction of a temple, a deep foundation pit was excavated to the level of ground water, believed to be Nun, the waters of chaos. The pit was filled with clean sand to replicate the origins of creation, when the primordial mound emerged from Nun.[16] From this point, the temple could be constructed.

Greek sites may have been purified prior to building, but our evidence for this practice is limited. At the site of Pergamon, excavation beneath Bau Z revealed a 5 cm thick layer of ash covered by a roof tile. This deposit was subsequently covered over by leveling fill.[17] Similar traces of ash, mixed in with ceramics or other materials, were discovered beneath temple D on the island of Samos, and were recorded by Pliny the Elder, who claims that the Artemesion at Ephesus was built on layers of charcoal and fleece.[18] The process of burning may have served to cleanse a potential temple site, preventing harmful spirits or vengeful gods from disrupting the construction.[19]

For the Romans, who frequently established new colonies throughout Italy and the Mediterranean, the foundation of a town was an important architectural event, associated with determining the arrangement and location of both public and private buildings. The Roman architect Vitruvius urges architects to

14 Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, 10. P. Delougaz and T. Jacobsen, *The Temple Oval at KhafAjah* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940), 11–17. Cf. the inscription on statue of Ur-Bau of Lagaš, Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, App A. No. 3.

15 J. Baines, "Temple Symbolism," *RAIN* (1976): 15.

16 E. Hornung, *Idea into Image: Essays on Ancient Egyptian Thought* (New York: Timken, 1992), 118.

17 W. Radt, "Pergamon: Vorbericht über die Kampagne 1993," *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1994 (1994): 408–22; cf. discussion in G.R. Hunt, "Foundation Rituals and the Culture of Building in Ancient Greece" (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 96–97.

18 Samos: U. Sinn, "Der sogenannte Tempel D im Heraion von Samos II," *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, athenische Abteilung* 100 (1985): 131–134; Artemesion: Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, 36.95.

19 Hunt, "Foundation Rituals and the Culture of Building," 190, 196–97; cf. C. Ambos, *Mesopotamische Baurituale aus dem 1. Jahrtausend V. Chr* (Dreden: Islet, 2004), 70.

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follow traditional rites, telling his readers that "our ancestors used to sacrifice some sheep pastured in the area where they wanted to establish towns or military camps, and examined their livers."[20] For Vitruvius, the discovery of healthy livers ensured that the local land produced potable water and nourishing food, but the rites of haruspication more importantly ascertained the attitudes of the gods towards an impending town foundation, and may have provided the new founders with a rough outline of where buildings should be placed.[21]

Practices designed to prepare the new urban site for occupation followed. At Rome, a pit, the *mundus*, was dug into virgin soil, and into it the new settlers placed first fruits, or perhaps unspecified beneficial objects.[22] The *mundus* was also connected to the spirits of the dead, the *manes*; other sources indicate that it was opened thrice yearly, on inauspicious days when the dead were said to wander the earth. Archaeological evidence has uncovered the remains of rites related to town foundation. At Cosa, a Roman colony dating to 273 BCE on the Italian coast, excavators discovered a rectangular pit cut into the rock that had been filled with vegetal material. The four corners of the pit are aligned with the centuriation of the new colony, and the later Capitolium, the temple to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, was built above this site.[23] Dorchester, England (ancient Durnovaria), preserved a series of nineteen pits that showed clear indications of ritual deposition over a substantial period. The pits were filled with layers of whole ceramic vessels, personal items, and animal bones, including remains from dogs, puppies, sheep, and birds, particularly ravens, crows and jackdaws (Illustration 20.1). Each layer was capped or sealed with a mixture of chalk and clay.[24] The location of these features, near to the geographic center of the town, suggests that the pits may represent the remains of a foundation rite that was commemorated in subsequent years.[25] The remains of dogs and carrion-eating birds connect these rites with the underworld, and the goddess Hekate, so that the *mundus* at Dorchester may have involved the appeasement of the dead.[26]

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20 Vitruvius. *De Architectura*, 1.3.9.

21 J. Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 54.

22 Ovid, *Fasti*, IV, 821; "good things": Festus, s.v. *quadrata Roma*.

23 F.E. Brown, E.H. Richardson, and L. Richardson, *Cosa II: The Temples of the Arx* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1960), 10–14.

24 P. Woodward and A. Woodward, "Dedicating the Town: Urban Foundation Deposits in Roman Britain," *World Archaeology* 36 (2004): 72–77 and figs. 2 and 3.

25 Woodward and Woodward, "Dedicating the Town," 83–84.

26 Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, 66.

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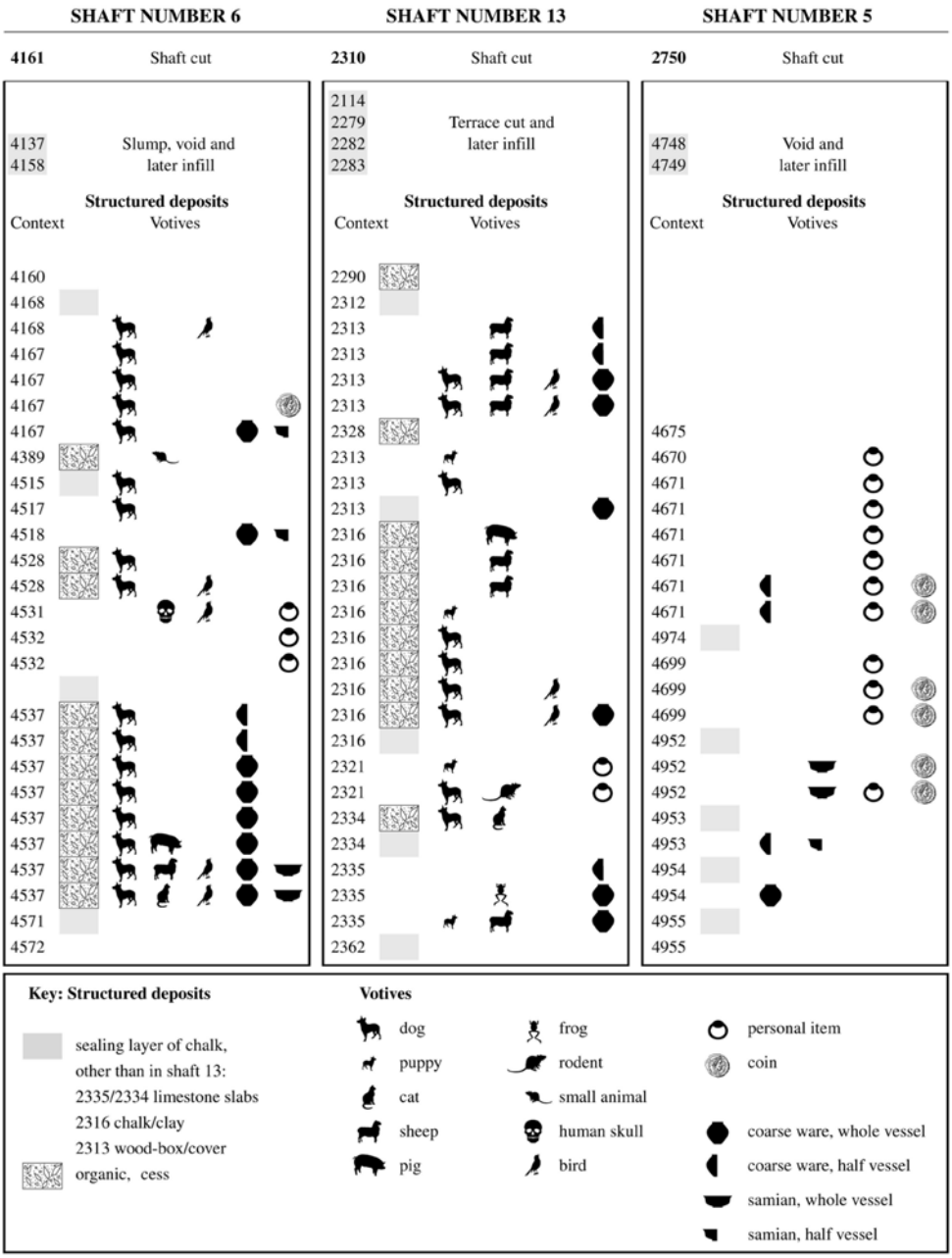

ILLUSTRATION 20.1 Diagram showing structured deposits from Greyhound Yard, Dorchester, shafts 6, 13, and 5, reprinted with permission from P. Woodward and A. Woodward. "Dedicating the Town: Urban Foundation Deposits in Roman Britain." *World Archaeology*, 36 (2004): 72–77, Figure 3.

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A specific rite also accompanied the delineation of the sacred boundary of the new town. According to the foundation legends of Rome, Romulus, having yoked a white cow and ox to a bronze plow, cut a furrow around the site of the embryonic city, centered around the mundus, marking the area that would be enclosed by the *pomerium* and monumentalized by a wall.[27] The pomerium was imbued with ritual significance: non-native cults could not take up residence within this sacred border, and triumphant generals needed to be purified before entering the city.[28] The rites of the Romans, like those of Mesopotamia, Greece and Egypt, were intended to ensure that an area was ritually appropriate. Since many foundation rituals are concerned with the safety of the residents, such precautions would guarantee that harmful forces lurking beneath the construction area would not compromise subsequent activity at the site.

3 The Foundation

The most important part of any structure, ancient or modern, is its foundation. Although some temples and private buildings were built entirely in stone, most houses and even administrative buildings in the ancient Mediterranean were of mud brick laid on a stone socle, or foundation. As in modern houses, the foundation of the ancient structure provided support for the superstructure, and poorly laid foundations, flooding, or earthquakes could undermine the foundation and cause the entire structure to subside or collapse. The permanence of the foundation has also led to its preservation—laid underground, these substructures are more likely to survive whole or in part, and thus, provide clear indicators or the shape and layout of an ancient building. The frequent survival of the foundation has also resulted in the preservation of material deposited around or below the substructure of buildings—the so-called foundation deposit.

Figurines, precious materials, stone tablets, and other objects are all attested from beneath the foundations. These objects can be understood as both acts of dedication and ritual events that do not serve a clear structural purpose. Artifacts and sacrifices enacted prior to construction were a commodity given to the supernatural in the hope of reciprocity—a good return—related to the

27 Plut. *Vita Romulus*, 11; Servius, in Vergil. *Aeneid*, IV.212, Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, V.19.

28 A. Simonelli, "Considerazioni sull'origine, la nature e l'evoluzione del pomerium," *Aevum* 75 (2001): 139–40, 150–51.

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building (either the act of building or the completed structure).[29] Further, the articles that were buried were removed from circulation, and hidden away, ensuring that the process of exchange was enacted only between the dedicator and the supernatural.[30] Ellis has suggested that foundation deposits in Mesopotamia should be read as (1) a means to consecrate the new structure, (2) prophylactic deposits aimed at protecting the building from malign forces, (3) dedications that commemorate the builder, and (4) elaborations of the richness or wealth of the building.[31] These potential readings are not mutually exclusive, and in fact, a foundation deposit could—and likely did—all of these things at once.

Textual sources related to foundation deposits are limited, and often obscure. In ancient Mesopotamia, a number of building inscriptions specify that foundations were laid "with the craft of the exorcist," suggesting that ritual personnel were vital to the proper completion of the rites. The rites may have involved the use of specific building implements and the deposition of perishable materials, artifacts, and statuettes beneath the foundation of the new building. Although it does not provide details on how these items are to be used, a late-period text from the reign of Narbonidus (ca. 556–539 BCE) lists spades, a bronze cup, a pot of oil, cypress, barley, and wool (both purple and blue) as important for laying the foundation of a gate.[32] Archaeological evidence provides a more robust record, but one that consequently requires a nuanced interpretation.

From an early period in the Near East, specially molded nails or pegs have been discovered beneath foundations and important rooms in the temple. A deposit from Ishtar Temple C (Early Dynastic II or IIIa, ca. 2550 BCE) at Mari can provide a typical example of a peg deposit. In each of seven deposits, excavators discovered a copper ring shaped like a capital 'D' with a thin bar extending from the upright side of the ring, positioned along the interior of the foundation wall. A round peg, created specifically for this purpose, pierced the center of the D-shaped ring, and two lapis lazuli and white stone tablets were placed on either side.[33] These objects may have been deposited to ensure that that foundation remained stable, so that by pinning down the D-shaped

29 R. Osborne, "Hoards, Votives, Offerings: The Archaeology of the Dedicated Object," *World Archaeology* 36 (2004): 2–3.

30 G. Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 49.

31 Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, 165–68.

32 Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, 30, 32 and App. 1, text 40.

33 A. Parrot, *Mission archéologique de Mari* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1956), 55–57, fig 38, Pls. XXIII–XXIV.

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ring, the entire foundation was secured.[34] The tablets, which accompany the Early Dynastic materials, appear to be one of the few standard elements of foundation deposits, appearing through the Achaemenid period.[35]

In the Early Dynastic levels at Telloh, pegs endowed with anthropomorphic characteristics were discovered beneath a gypsum pavement in a building dedicated to the god Ningirsu (ca. 2500–2400 BCE).[36] Some peg figurines were arranged in concentric circles beneath the slabs, while others, also arranged in circles, were found under the foundations and at the corners of the building.[37] Each of the figurines depicted a beardless human being, with arms positioned in front of their bodies and hands clasped in a gesture described as prayer. The torso of each figurine tapers down into a point (Illustration 20.2).[38] Under Ur-Bau and his more famous successor, Gudea, (ca. 2200–2100 BCE) the foundation deposits separate the human figure from the peg, and depict a beaded god who holds a peg within his hands. The figurines along with an inscribed stone tablet were placed upright in boxes made of fired brick. The boxes were arranged in squares that roughly delimited the corners of sacred buildings or placed in pairs at the boundaries of stairways, doors or other interior architectural features.[39] In subsequent centuries, the use of the peg figurine declines, but the deposition of stone or fired brick boxes, which contained figurines and other objects, continues. The latter artifacts, however, may have served a different function—to protect the building—and will be discussed below.

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34 Relatively similar early dynastic deposits of rings and pegs were discovered at the site of Uruk. The Eanna precinct also yielded a figurine whose torso tapered into a point; it is likely that this object is also an ED or ED II peg figurine. H.J. Lenzen et al., *Vorläufiger Bericht über die von dem deutschen archäologischen Institut und der deutschen Orient-Gesellschäft aus Mitteln der deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft unternommenen Uusgrabungen in Uruk-Warka* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1956), 23. pl. 13. cf. discussion in Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, 48–49.

35 Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, 104.

36 A. Parrot, *Tello: Vingt campagnes de fouilles (1877–1933)* (Paris: Albin-Michel, 1948), 58.

37 M. de Sarzec and L.A. Heuzey, *Découvertes en Chaldée* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1884), 414, Plan C, 2; L.A. Heuzey and M. de Sarzec, *Une villa royale chaldéenne vers l'an 4000 avant notre ère* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1900), 56–57.

38 De Sarzec and Heuzey, *Decouvertes en Chaldee.* Peg figurines of the king Entemena (ca 2450 BCE) from Telloh were discovered at the four corners of a building and in front of the door: Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, 53; de Sarzec and Heuzey, *Decouvertes en Chaldee*, 241, 420; Heuzey and de Sarzec, *Une villa royale chaldéenne*, 86. Other Early Dynastic foundation deposits can be surmised from the discovery of stone tablets and copper axes from Umma and Adab. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, 54–55.

39 See Ellis, *Foundation Deposits*, 61 n. 105, for references to these peg figurines; de Sarzec and Heuzey, *Découvertes en Chaldée*, 71–72.

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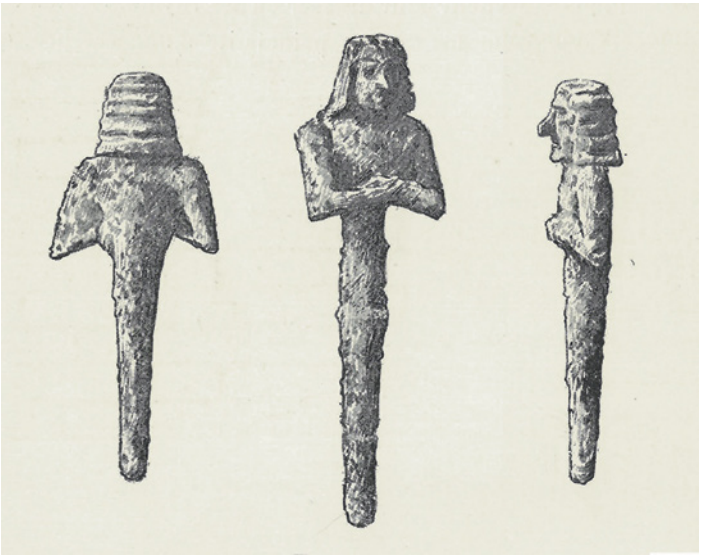

ILLUSTRATION 20.2 Peg figurines discovered at Telloh, from L.A. Heuzey and M. de Sarzec, *Une villa royale chaldéenne vers l'an 4000 avant notre ère* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1900), 5.

The peg or peg figurine, in all cases where the artifact was discovered in situ, was positioned vertically, so that the point of the figurine faced downwards; for the figural pegs, this arrangement was required so that the image was oriented correctly. While contemporary written evidence offers little to explain the function of these objects, one possible purpose can be derived from a Hittite text from Boğazköy in Asia Minor, which provides instructions for constructing a house or temple. In the beginning of the text, the builder is instructed to "(take) a mina of refined copper, 4 bronze pegs, 1 small iron hammer. In the center, at the place of the *kurraki*, he digs up the ground. He deposits the copper therein, nails it down on all sides with the pegs, and afterwards hits it with a hammer." An incantation follows: "just as this copper is secured, as moreover, it is firm, even so let this temple be secure!"[40] The procedure ensures that the foundation will be stable through the use of a substitute for the building. According to the text, the practitioner also places multiple models of

40 KBo 4.1; Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi (KUB) II, 2 and KUB IX, 33. Transliteration and transcription in P.M. Witzel, *Heititische Keilschrift-Urkunden in Transcription und Uebersetzung mit Kommentar* (Heidelberg: Verlag des Verfassers, 1924), 76–87; translation in J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 356–57.

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architectural components beneath the intended location for these features, so that beneath the door, for example, the builder places doors of silver, gold, lapis, jasper, iron, bronze, marble and diorite, each weighing one shekel.

The deposition of miniatures or models beneath the foundation occurs in multiple cultural contexts. The process of miniaturization requires the creator of an object to choose which features of the object are most important, as the small size of a model artifact cannot be a complete copy. Through this process, select components effectively stand in for the whole; but in turn, the chosen elements are outsized.[41] Miniaturization allows larger objects to be domesticated, and brought under the control of the practitioner. Small altars and other ritual elements can duplicate the features of temples or public rituals, permitting mobile ritual specialists to transport and utilize smaller versions.[42] As in Pharaonic Egypt, where models of food or depictions of feasting could sustain the dead in the tomb through the afterlife, miniaturized tools and building materials may have continually built or repaired the temple.[43] The removal of these objects from the "real" world ensured their protection—if these objects maintained a resonance with those used in the construction, the preservation of the building components beneath the completed structure would ensure the continued existence of the finished temple or tomb above.

Egyptian textual sources as well as artifacts recovered from excavations reveal a concern with sanctifying and commemorating the built structure. The surviving evidence relates to royal monuments, temples, and some tombs; the evidence for foundation rites for private, secular structures is lacking.[44] An idealized sequence of events can be reconstructed from the walls of temples and in building inscriptions, particularly the Ptolemaic period temples at Edfu, Kom Ombo, Dendera and Philae.[45] The representations depict the king acting

41 S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 44, 54. A more nuanced approach can be taken with texts, where in some cases, short passages of biblical text can stand in for a longer textual unit. J.E. Sanzo, *Scriptural* Incipits *on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

42 J.Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power,* ed. M.W. Meyer and P.A. Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 24–26.

43 P.A. Piccone, "Tomb Furnishings," in *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, ed. K.A. Bard and S.B. Shubert (London: Routledge, 1999), 839.

44 J.M. Weinstein, "Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt" (PhD diss., The University of Pennsylvania, 1973), 432–33.

45 Weinstein, "Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt," 2–3. E. Lefébure, *Rites égyptiens: Construction et protection des édifices* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1890); A. Moret, *Du caractère religieux de la royauté pharonique* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1902); F.W. Bissing and H. Kees, *Untersuchungen zu den Reliefs aus dem Re-Heiligtum des Rathures* (Munich: Verlag der

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in concert with the gods. The king's role is ceremonial, and it is unlikely that he would have performed the actions that are depicted. During the building process, another individual would have acted on his behalf. These sources, which portray foundation rites as relatively unchanged from the early dynastic period down to contemporary time, record a series of ten actions undertaken by the king in the construction of a new temple. After (1) departing from the palace and (2) arriving at the site, the king (3) performs the ritual of stretching the cord, which involves using a rope to lay out the corners of the structure as well as its internal features. The king then (4) digs the foundation trench and (5) molds the first brick, a rite that was largely symbolic, as temples were built of stone after the Pre-Dynastic period. After (6) pouring sand into the foundation trench, the king (7) places plaques made of precious metal or stone within it, and (8) initiates the construction of the building. Following the completion, the king returns to the site, (9) purifies the temple and (10) presents it to the god. This sequence of events is tied to the proper sanctification of the structure and offering the completed building to the gods.

Archaeological evidence serves as our most reliable source of information about the development and permutations of foundation rites as they were practiced. These rituals, the basic form of which had been established by the Middle Kingdom (2040–1640 BCE), demonstrated a relatively slight degree of variation over approximately 2000 years. Materials were placed at each of the four corners of the structure. Many of the deposits consisted of models of the tools used in the creation of the structure. So, for example, in one of the deposits of king Ay at Medinet Habu (ca. 1323 BCE), excavators discovered miniaturized plumb lines, stakes, and mallets in one of the pits.[46] Bricks, which were the most common and standardized deposition, were molded directly before interment, and some bricks, due to their misshapen appearance, clearly indicate that they were placed in the pit before drying.[47] Inscribed plaques of precious and semi-precious materials that listed the name of the dedicating king also were placed within many of the foundation pits. Deposition beneath the building secured the connection between the dedicator and structure. Next, clean sand, and at times, a layer of natron, was placed above the deposit. This was intended to seal and protect the deposition and to purify the structure continually once it was completed. Consecration may also have involved

Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1922); P. Montet, "Le rituel de fondation des temples," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 104 (1960): 172–79.

46 Weinstein, "Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt," 220–21, 417.

47 Weinstein, "Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt," 419.

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animal sacrifices; the remains of cows and geese have been found as part of foundations, and both animals are depicted in reliefs of the foundation rite.[48] After the rites had been concluded, the first blocks were set in place, using the building to cover the deposit and protect it from disturbance. The foundation ritual chiefly addresses the relationship between the king, the built structure, and the gods. Beyond the act of commemoration, many of the objects interred within the foundation are direct related to the process of building, and would have functioned both as dedications and as power objects to sustain the structure after its completion.

Until recently, Greek and Roman foundation deposits have received less attention, largely due to limited textual and archaeological evidence for the phenomenon.[49] One of the earliest and most important foundation deposits derives from the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, excavated by D. Hogarth from 1904–1905. Hogarth's investigations of the so-called Earlier Basis, a foundation for a statue base or naiskos, discovered a large quantity of objects made of precious metals (gold, silver and electrum), including jewelry and figurines, and a quantity of small animal bones and ash, likely the remains of a sacrifice.[50] This material was found on a layer of clean sand that served as fill for the feature. Nearby, and likely beneath the southwest corner of the enclosure, Hogarth uncovered a sealed pot containing 19 coins.[51] The discovery of these two features, both within a layer of clean sand, suggest intentional deposition on the part of the builders. The objects may have been deposited as an offering or votive, perhaps to ensure the protection or soundness of the structure. Precious metals, which would not have rusted or decayed, may have been viewed as appropriate offerings, conferring their own permanence on the structure being built. Similar groups of artifacts that include precious metals and the remains of animal bones or ash, have been discovered along the coast of Asia Minor (the Greek East) and on several Cycladic islands. Excavations at Greek sites on the mainland have also revealed foundation deposits, but these typically lack the precious materials commonly discovered in the east. Rather, the caches contain ceramic vessels for drinking and dining, occasional lamps, and, where excavation records have been sufficient, floral and faunal remains.[52]

Greek foundation deposits suggest that sacrifice and communal meals were celebrated prior to or during construction. The burial of the artifacts used in

48 Weinstein, "Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt," 424.

49 Hunt, "Foundation Rituals and the Culture of Building."

50 D.G. Hogarth, *The Archaic Artemisia* (London: British Museum, 1908), 33–35.

51 Hogarth, *The Archaic Artemisia*, 42–43; Hunt, "Foundation Rituals and the Culture of Building," 196.

52 Hunt, "Foundation Rituals and the Culture of Building," 104–5.

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ritual meals may be attributed to the need to separate sacred objects from the secular world. Furthermore, the placement of these artifacts beneath the structures associated with the ritual may have permitted the objects to continue to function after they had been deposited. Based on comparison with rites from the Near East from which these practices may have derived, Greek foundation rituals may have appeased hostile spirits or divinities or endowed the new buildings with protection against malign spirits.[53] Precious materials, which appear in the East Greek deposits, may have associated these metals with the newly built structure, much as was the case with the Hittite text from Boğazköy in Asia Minor.[54] Although few attestations has been preserved in the literary and epigraphic record, the material testimony from Greece suggests that foundation rituals, which certainly included feasting and sacrifice, marked the initial stages of building as important, and requiring divine approval.

The evidence for Roman foundation deposits is equally limited. When the Capitolium in Rome was rebuilt in 70 CE, Tacitus records that gold and silver ore were deposited in the foundations.[55] Although our literary sources point to the deposition of unworked precious metals, in practice, gold, silver, and even bronze coinage may have been interred by the Romans as part of foundation rituals. Donderer has suggested that coins were intentionally deposited beneath architectural features to ensure the preservation of the new structure and to give thanks for its completion.[56] A deposit from Trier may reflect and elaborate on this numismatic practice. In the corner of the cellar of a large building complex, excavation uncovered a pot decorated with a rudely molded human face into which a small pot had been placed. The small pot, in turn, held a bronze coin of Commodus. The shell of a garden snail and the lower incisor of a horse were placed in front of the pot (Illustration 20.3).[57] A second deposit of a glass

53 Hunt, "Foundation Rituals and the Culture of Building," 194–96. No divinities can be securely associated with the deposits.

54 Coins, discovered in some deposits, may have endowed the building with the amuletic properties associated with numismatic objects. Cf. L. Viet and H. Maué, *Münzen in Brauch und Aberglauben* (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1982).

55 Tacitus, *Historiae*, 4.53.4.

56 M. Donderer, "Münzen als Bauopfer in römischen Privathäusern," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 184 (1984): 178. Donderer provides a detailed catalog of architectural features and mosaics under which coins were discovered.

57 S.F. Pfahl, "Ein römischen pars pro toto-Doppelbauopfer mit gesichtstopf der Zeit um 200 n. chr. aus dem keller eines Wohnhauses der Augusta Treverorum," *Trierer Zeitschrift für Geschischte und Kunst des Trierer Landes und seiner Nachbargebiete* 63 (2000): 251–52, Abb. 7–8.

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ILLUSTRATION 20.3 Deposit discovered at Trier. a. ceramic vessel decorated with human face. b. small ceramic vessel found inside (a). Shaded area, discovered with small vessel: c. obverse of bronze coin of Commodus. d. reverse of bronze coin of Commodus. e. shell of garden snail and lower incisor of a horse.
ASSEMBLAGE INV. 1998.4 © GDKE/RHEINISCHES LANDESMUSEUM TRIER, PHOTOGRAPH BY TH. ZÜHMER

vessel and bone fragment (now lost) was discovered in an adjacent corner.[58] The preservation of near-complete vessels suggests intentional deposition, and a vessel with a sculpted face may have been selected for its apotropaic qualities: to ward off any individual or spirit who might disrupt the contents.[59]

In the broad sweep of the Roman empire, other rites were specific to a particular geographic region. At the town of Springhead, in Great Britain, excavation under the four corners of a 1st-century CE Roman-style temple revealed four child skeletons, one placed at each corner.[60] In the first deposition, one child and one decapitated child (each approximately six months old) were deposited on the east side of the building. Approximately ten years later,

58 Pfahl, "Ein römischen pars pro toto-Doppelbauopfer," 253–54, Abb 9–10.
59 Pfahl, "Ein römischen pars pro toto-Doppelbauopfer," 257.
60 W.S. Penn, "Springhead: Temples III and IV," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 74 (1960): 118–24.

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in apparent emulation of the former ceremony, the rite was repeated for the west side.[61] The burial of neonates beneath or in close association with temples is also attested at the sites of Uley and Ivy Chimneys, Witham, Essex, while infant burials are known from private shrines at Haymes, Gloucestershire, and Walcot, Bristol.[62] Although a related sacrifice and burial, that of a sixty-five year old woman, is attested for a wall at Lowbury hill, these rituals are largely confined to a specific, localized part of the Roman empire.[63] It is not possible to determine whether these neonates represent sacrifices or the burial of children who died of natural causes. The significance remains obscure; placed within liminal religious spaces, these infant burials may be associated with older Celtic traditions related to perambulation at shrines, or may be tied to rites that ensure the permanence of the structure.[64] The apparent absence of complex and standardized foundation deposits prior to building construction such as in Mesopotamia and Egypt may be a reflection of our inability to quantify such rites due to limited visibility in the archaeological record as much as it may indicate the relative simplicity of Roman rites.

4 The Enclosure

The enclosure distinguished the interior space from the exterior world. These walls—whether permanent or temporary, faced inwards and outwards permitting the builders to convey different messages depending upon whether the viewer was within or outside of the space of the house. And, although the walls acted as a barrier, they were also porous—doorways and windows led

61 Penn, "Springhead: Temples III and IV," 121; R. Philpott, *Burial Practices in Roman Britain* (London: Tempus Reparatum, 1991), 177; S. Mays, "Infanticide in Roman Britain," *Antiquity* 67 (1993), 883+.

62 Uley: A. Woodward, P. Leach, and J. Bayley, *The Uley Shrines: Excavation of a Ritual Complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire, 1977–9* (London: English Heritage in association with British Museum Press, 1993); Ivy Chimneys: R. Turner, *Excavations of an Iron Age Settlement and Roman Religious Complex at Ivy Chimneys, Witham, Essex 1978–83* (Heritage Conservation, Essex County Council, 1999); Haymes: B. Rawes, "The Romano-British Settlement at Haymes, Cleeve Hill, near Cheltenham," *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society* 104 (1986): 61–93; Walcot: S.S. Frere, *Verulamium Excavations* (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1972).

63 D. Atkinson, *The Romano-British Site on Lowbury Hill in Berkshire* (Reading: University College, 1916).

64 S. Esmonde Cleary, "Putting the Dead in Their Place: Burial Location in Roman Britain," in *Burial, Society and Context in the Roman World*, ed. J. Pearce, M. Millett, and M. Struck (Exeter, UK: Oxbow Books, 2001), 135–36; A. Moore, "Hearth and Home: The Burial of Infants within Romano-British Domestic Contexts," *Childhood in the Past* 2 (2009): 47.

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to the outside, but also offered an opportunity for malign spirits or ill-wishing humans and animals to enter. Often neither indoors nor out, windows and doors were positioned at a liminal point that divided the controlled space of the interior from the wild exterior.[65] In Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome, such spaces required special consideration, and the enclosure was frequently adorned with protective features.

The term *apotropaic* derives from the Geek verb *apotropein*, which means to turn away or avert, and is often applied to images thought to dissuade or turn away evil spirits.[66] While apotropaic features may have served a decorative function, they were also functional, and protected and preserved both the building and its inhabitants.[67] Apotropaia "worked" through multiple means—it was possible to challenge, threaten, frighten, forbid or merely divert the forces that intended harm. A threatening force would be dissuaded by an image that was also frightening to those whom the image was meant to protect.[68] The image also might attract the protection of a beneficent deity, who would safeguard the building against potential intruders.[69] Alternatively, the menace could be dissuaded through laughter, which would provide a distraction.[70] Images that are used for apotropaic purposes often incorporate the shocking or grotesque in order to both repulse and attract, and to cause fascination in the viewer;

65 A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 15–25; Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 222.

66 The word is often used in Greek as an epithet to describe particular deities, such as Apollo, or to qualify a special kind of sacrifice, and is not used to describe artifacts, amulets, or in our case, sculptures, inscriptions or mosaics. C.A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 5. On apotropaic imagery, see C. Sütterlin, "Ethological Aspects of Apotropaic Symbolism in Art," in *Sociobiology and the Arts*, ed. J.B. Bedeaux and B. Cooke (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999).

67 R.R. Holloway, "Early Greek Architectural Decoration as Functional Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 92 (1988): 177.

68 E.H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1984), 261; D. Levi, "The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback," in *Antioch on the Orontes III: The Excavations 1937–1939*, ed. R. Stillwell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941), 225; C.A. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans: The Gladiator and the Monster* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 168–72.

69 L. Feldt, "Monstrous Figurines from Mesopotamia: Texuality, Spatiality and Materiality in Rituals and Incantations for the Protection of Houses in First Millenium Aššur," in *The Materiality of Magic*, ed. D. Boschung and J.N. Bremmer (Paderborn: Verlag Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 71.

70 J.R. Clarke, *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 130–31.

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the image results in confusion and entrapment, and the would-be attacker is diverted from his goal.[71]

Large-scale carvings of animal hybrids walking on two or four feet grace the walls of many Neo-Assyrian palaces, appearing most frequently at the entrances to buildings and rooms. Many of these monsters (who walk on four legs) and demons (who walk on two) are known from earlier periods of Mesopotamian history when they represented harmful forces; over time, these same creatures were employed in the service of the king, and were utilized as apotropaic representations.[72] One of the best-known figural types is that of the winged, human headed bulls, attested at the Neo-Assyrian palaces constructed by Tiglath-Pileser I, Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser II, Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (Illustration 20.4). At Nineveh, these creatures flank the main entrances and subsequent doorways of the palace of Sennecharib, leading the visitor through the palace towards the throne room. The positioning of these figures as guardians in front of the main palace doors suggested that they were intended to prevent the entrance of a wide variety of malign spirits and sicknesses.[73] The figures at the entryway were complemented by additional apotropaic images that adorned palace walls, in which demons and monsters are depicted in close proximity to the king, and are shown undertaking ritual tasks. Although the size and position of the king increased in importance relative to the apotropaic figures on palace depictions during the succeeding centuries, there is little reason to infer that royal reliance on demonic assistance lessened during this same period.[74]

The visible protection afforded by the monumental statues and reliefs was supplemented through the burial of figurines at strategic points related to architectural features. Caches of figurines have been identified at a number

71 W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 82; A. Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 84.

72 E. Porada and others, *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada* (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1986) 1–2. The main catalogs of apotropaic images on the palace reliefs are D. Rittig, *Assyrisch-Babylonische Kleinplastik magischer Bedeutung vom 13.–6. Jh. v. Chr* (Munich: Verlag Uni-Druck 1977) and D. Kolbe, *Die Reliefprogramme religiös-mythologischen Charakters in neuassyrischen Palästen* (Frankfurt: P.D. Lang 1981). For additional bibliography and summation of these figural types, see J.M. Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 310–11, nn. 17–21.

73 J.E. Reade, "Assyrian Architectural Decoration: Techniques and Subject Matter," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 10 (1979): 35.

74 T. Ornan, "Expelling Demons at Nineveh: On the Visibility of Benevolent Demons in the Palaces of Nineveh," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 88.

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ILLUSTRATION 20.4 Colossal statue of a winged human-headed bull from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (Room S); Guardian of the palace of King Ashurnasirpal II. 1850,1228.2. AN32603001.
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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ILLUSTRATION 20.5
Lion-headed figurine discovered at the palace of Sargon at Khorsabad. From G. Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874* (New York, Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1875), 78.

of royal palaces constructed by Neo-Assyrian kings, including the "Southeast Palace" at Nimrud, associated with Shalmaneser (858–824), and at the Burnt Palace at Nimrud, discovered in levels that can be associated with Adad-nirari (810–783) and Sargon II (721–705) (Illustration 20.5).[75] At the Neo-Assyrian palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad, excavation plans demonstrate that caches of figurines, buried in fired brick boxes, and positioned to face the interior of the room, were discovered beneath the floor directly in

75 Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 184. G. Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries: an Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh, During 1873 and 1874* (Cambridge: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1875), 78; M.E.L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (London: Collins, 1966), vol. 1, 226–29, figs. 188–192.

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front of the doorjambs.[76] The images depict a variety of demons, often holding weapons or other implements in their hands. Multiple copies of a lion headed human with the feet of an eagle were discovered among the figurines deposited at the palace of Sargon at Khorsabad. This individual has been identified as the *ugallu* (storm demon or great lion) who holds a dagger in one hand and another weapon in the other.[77]

At Aššur, the so-called *Haus des Beschwörungspriesters*, a building associated with a priestly school, provides an intersection between archaeological evidence of apotropaic figurines and a related ritual text.[78] Forty-nine separate figurines, of three different types, were discovered in sixteen distinct deposits within fired-brick boxes, containers that can be understood as miniature houses for the spirits (Illustration 20.6).[79] The majority of the deposits, eleven in all, come from a single, interior room in the building; brick boxes of figurines had been placed at three of four corners of the room (deposits 4, 8 and 9), at the entranceway to two adjacent rooms (deposits 1, 5 and 7), and in the center of the room (deposits 6, 10 and 11).[80] These locations effectively enclose the room while also guarding against the entrance of unwanted guests.[81]

Two contemporary ritual texts from Aššur and Nineveh provide further details about the buried figurines and suggest that they warded off hostile forces. The first, a reconstructed Babylonian text, details the rituals undertaken to rid a home of a plethora of dangerous spirits, including evil demons, gods

76 P.E. Botta and E.N. Flandin, *Monument de Ninive* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1849), vol. 1, pls. 24, 29.

77 A. Green, "The Lion Demon in the Art of Mesopotamia and Neighboring Regions: Materials Towards the Encyclopedia of Mesopotamian Religious Iconography," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 17 (1986): 152–55.

78 C. Nakamura, "Dedicating Magic: Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figurines and the Protection of Assur," *World Archaeology* 36 (2004): 19.

79 C. Nakamura, "Mastering Matters: Magical Sense and Apotropaic Figurine Worlds of Neo-Assyria," in *Archaeologies of Materiality*, ed. L. Meskell (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 38; Feldt, "Monstrous Figurines from Mesopotamia," 66–67. The placement of the figurines within boxes made of fired brick recalls the foundation deposits known from Mesopotamian temples and court buildings, and indeed, there are undeniable similarities between the two ritual processes. It seems probable that the use of figurines as protective devices developed from the foundation deposits or that the materials placed beneath the foundations were believed to safeguard the building. These dual functions are complementary, and can be distinguished based both on the placement of the objects, whether beneath the foundations or in approximate distance to elements of the superstructure, as well as by the construction phase in which the deposition occurred.

80 R.S. Ellis, "The Trouble with 'Hairies'," *Iraq* 57 (1995): 164–5. Pruesser suggests that the southwest corner was robbed out. C. Preusser, *Die Wohnhäuser in Assur* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1954), 58.

81 Nakamura, "Mastering Matters," 22–23.

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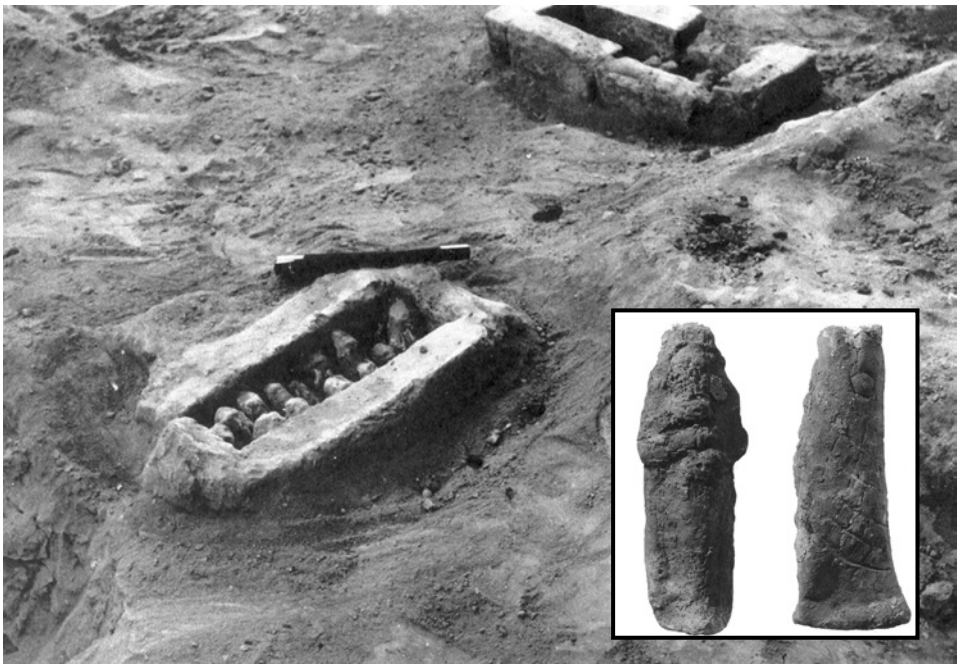

ILLUSTRATION 20.6 Brick Box 11, which contained *apkallu*, or figurines of sages depicted with fish cloaks (shown in inset), from the Haus des Beschwörungspriesters, Aššur. After C. Preusser, *Die Wohnhäuser in Assur* (Berlin: Gebr Mann, 1954), Tafel 28, 29.

and ghosts (l. 1–15), and was entitled "to block the entry of the enemy into someone's house".[82] In the rite, the exorcist is instructed to create a number of protective figurines of gods and monsters out of clay and wood, and cleanse the house using the statuettes.[83] A second, complementary Babylonian text, KAR 298 was discovered in the same location as the figurines, the *Haus des Beschwörungspriesters*. In it, the practitioner is instructed to inter the statues (presumably the same images used in the first text) at specific places within

82 F.A.M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (Groningen: Styx Publications: 1992), text 1, 1–39. on the same text, cf. H. Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion: Die Beschwörungstafeln Surpu, Ritualtafeln für den Wahrsager, Beschwörer und Sänger* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1975), texts 41–42, 45–47, 50; O.R. Gurney, "Babylonian Prophylactic Figurines and Their Rituals," *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 22 (1935): 31–96.

83 E.g. at line 184: "two statues of [hairies clad] in white paste and wat[er drawn on in black paste] / you shall make, two statues of Viper, two statues of Furious-Snake, two statues [of Big Weather-Beast] …" trans. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 15.

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the house.[84] According to the text, figurines are buried at the entrances to the building, in doorways, hallways, and in the middle of rooms. Of particular note are the appearance of those images that are placed at points in the house vulnerable to the outside—each of these figures is armed with a weapon of some sort, reinforcing the interpretation that the images are meant to protect the householders from outside attack. The text can expand our interpretation of the archaeological material, demonstrating the ways in which the ritual specialist could manipulate and protect the architectural unit. By miniaturizing these divine beings, the practitioner becomes master of both the gods and their protective power; the divinities, controlled by the ritual specialist, can turn away malign forces.[85] Furthermore, by placing the figurines underground, enclosed in their own "houses"—the practitioner directs the force the gods towards the protection of human space.[86] The figurines, buried in front of the entrances, remain hidden from view, but known to the practitioner and residents.[87]

The palace of Sennacherib illustrates the ways in which the apotropaic reliefs and the miniaturized figurines interacted to provide protection for the king and his residence. In addition to the traditional monumental demons depicted by his predecessors, Assurnasirpal II and Sargon II, Sennacherib added new figural types that echo the depictions of figurines buried in the palaces of his predecessors. For example, the spirit shown with six curls and holding a pole with a triangular top, the lahmu or "hairy one," is among the figurines discovered at the palace of Sargon II, Sennacherib's father.[88] Other protective spirits depicted in the wall panels of Sennacherib's palace are known from figurine deposits the palace at Khorsabad, Ur and the Burnt Palace at Nimrud. This replication of imagery was presumably an effort to transfer a protective function, formerly associated with the burial of apotropaic images, to the superstructure of the building, effectively revealing objects that were previously hidden.[89] Sennacherib's innovation provided both a pleasing decorative

84 Gurney, "Babylonian Prophylactic Figurines," 67–75.

85 Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 60–62, 96–97; Nakamura, "Mastering Matters," 33.

86 Nakamura, "Mastering Matters," 38; Feldt, "Monstrous Figurines from Mesopotamia," 85–88.

87 T. Ruppel et al., "Hidden in View: African Spiritual Spaces in North American Landscapes," *Antiquity* 77 (2003): 321–55; M. Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 50.

88 Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 184. On this figure, see Ellis, "The Trouble with 'Hairies'".

89 Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace*, 184–86.

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scheme that would awe visitors to the palace while outfitting the palace with monumentalized security.

These monumental responses to demonic threats can be compared to a simpler private ritual intended to have a similar effect. A Neo-Assyrian text to prevent the entrance of apparitions instructs the practitioner to smear a certain mixture on the door, the doorbolt, and furniture within the client's bedroom. The practitioner then intones the spell, which banishes all ghosts, urging "may the wall hold you back, my the door of my gate turn back your breast at the command of Ea, Samas (and) the asipu among the gods, Asalluhi."[90] Taken together, these rites suggest a significant concern among royal and even private residents of Mesopotamia that malign spirits might pass through the porous walls of a house and cause one of the inhabitants to fall ill or suffer harm. Imagery and decoration strengthened and supplemented the existing superstructure of the building.

As in Mesopotamia, the exterior walls of buildings in Egypt played an important role in separating inner, safe space from the dangers of the outside world. The external world—the desert—was inhabited by demonic creatures that were emblematic of chaos.[91] These beings threatened the Egyptian cosmic order that was assured by the king. The Egyptian temple was situated within a series of enclosure walls that divided sacred space from the profane exterior world. This physical and conceptual boundary was also intended to guard against the forces of chaos, in part through the material from which the wall was constructed, mud-brick.[92]

The images carved on the exterior of the outermost enclosure employed iconography that showed the king smiting his enemies, a representation common in Egyptian art from the pre-Dynastic period. Pilgrims and visitors approaching the walls of the temple would witness the king in the act of dominating foreign peoples and other hostile forces.[93] The representation continually replayed the scene of smiting, enacting the process by which the king destroyed his enemies

90 J.A. Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006) Text 18 (CT 23.15–22 + BAM 230 + BAM 546 + K 2415 + Sm 1227), 216.

91 L. Keimer, "L'horreur des égyptiens pour les démons du désert," *Bulletin de l'institut d'Égypte* 26 (1944): 138.

92 M.J. Raven, "Magical and Symbolic Aspects of Certain Materials in Ancient Egypt," *Varia Aegyptica* 4 (1988): 241.

93 R.K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 115; R.H. Wilkinson, *Symbol & Magic in Egyptian Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 67.

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ILLUSTRATION 20.7 Doorjamb carved in shape of bound prisoner, from Hierakonpolis
COURTESY OF PENN MUSEUM, IMAGE # NC35-31055

and ensured the protection of the Egyptian cosmos (Illustration 18.3).[94] Spells also were inscribed on the pylons of certain temples, embodying the protective power of the king in text as well as image. The Ptolemaic-period temple of Philae preserves an inscription intended to repel the forces of chaos, in this case represented as the antelopes of the desert: "All the antelopes of the desert are slaughtered in the place of execution, the enemy of the eye is burned."[95]

Imagery that depicted the conquest of enemies is repeated within other architectural features and incorporated into the artistic vocabulary of royal palaces. A first dynasty temple at Hierakonpolis preserves a doorjamb that is carved in the shape of a bound prisoner, his head pierced by the pivot of the door (Illustration 20.7). Each time the door was opened, the pivot twisted

94 P. Derchain, "Remarques sur la décoration de pylônes ptolémaïques," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 18 (1961): 48.

95 D. Frankfurter, "The Binding of Antelopes: A Coptic Frieze and Its Egyptian Religious Context," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 63 (2004): 102.

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into the prisoner, ensuring eternal torment and domination.[96] At the palace of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, the heads of bound prisoners are arrayed along the lower sill of the "window of appearance," permitting the king to crush his enemies whenever he addressed his people.[97] Ritual domination is reserved for the king, and perhaps more importantly, is directed at the enemies of the state, whether foreign, domestic, or demonic.

An interest in protection and safety can also be detected in the traditions and practices of monumental architecture in 7th and 6th century Greece. Stone lions preserved at the entrance to the sanctuary of Leta on Delos, as well as paired lions known from Didyma and Miletus, may have served as watchful guardians of doorways, repelling demonic forces.[98] Doorways and gates were also marked by the images of protective deities, much as those found on the palace reliefs of the Near East. At the site of Thasos, paired reliefs of Herakles and Dionysus stand guard over the main gate to the city, accompanied by the inscription "the Zeus-begotten sons of Semele and long robed Alcmene stand as guardians [*phylakoi*] of this city;" subsidiary gates were also decorated with figures of gods (Illustration 20.8).[99]

Like the exterior of the sanctuary or town, protective devices adorned the enclosing walls of a private house. Literary sources record that statues of protective deities, *theoi prothyraioi*, stood in front of shops, homes, and other establishments, but archaeological evidence for these is lacking.[100] More common is the herm, a simple stone block with a head, arms and a phallus. Herms, sacred to the god Hermes, were typically placed at locations that were related

96 Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 118. Ritner notes that a similar motif appears in the literature of the Demotic period.

97 Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 125. At Medinet Habu, the window frame was placed at a level with the heads of the observers, so that viewers from afar would see the king standing on the heads of his people, as well as the heads of his enemies.

98 C.A. Faraone, "Hephaestus the Magician and near Eastern Parallels for Alcinous' Watchdogs," *GRBS* 28 (1987): 267–68, and nn. 36 and 37. Faraone also cites the pair of lions guarding the gates of Sardis. G.M.A. Hanfmann and N.H. Ramage, *Sculpture from Sardis: The Finds through 1975* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). Several lions were found at Etruscan sites, presumably to guard the tombs. Brown, Richardson, and Richardson, *Cosa II*, 66–72. Homer, *Odyssey*, 7.91–94 refers to gold and silver dogs of Hephaestus that guard the doors to Alcinous' palace. Faraone, "Hephaestus the Magician," 257.

99 *Inscriptiones Graecae*, 12.8.356. Translation and discussion in Faraone, "Hephaestus the Magician," 58.

100 Faraone, "Hephaestus the Magician," 8.

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ILLUSTRATION 20.8 Thasos, Reliefs of Herakles from Gate of Dionysos and Herakles. Adapted from A. Joubin, "Relief archaïque de Thasos," *Bulletin de correspondence hellénique* 18 (1894): plate XVI.

to transitions, including crossroads and borders, marking the limits of property and also guarding against illicit entrance.[101]

The phallus, a prominent feature of the herm statues, was particularly important as a device used to avert the evil eye. The gaze of the envious (*invidia* or *phthonos*) was believed to bring misfortune on the object of envy.[102] As an apotropaic counter-measure, the erect phallus was displayed on or near

101 Pausanias, 6.25.5 notes that an image of wooden penis served as the cult statue for the god Hermes at Cyllene in Elis. The phallus was also significant in the cult of Dionysus. See H. Herter, s.v. *Phallos*, in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1938). The Babylonians used the phallus to mark territorial boundaries: W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 58 and n. 2.

102 K.M.D. Dunbabin and M.W. Dickie, "*Invidia Rumpantur Pectora*: The Iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art," *JAC* 26 (1983): 9–19. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans*, 91–95.

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buildings and even city walls throughout the Mediterranean, from Classical Athens well into the Late Roman period. The efficacy of the phallus is twofold: it is a mark of male virility, and could pierce the evil eye, which was shaped like female genitalia, but it is also an absurd image, one that might draw the evil eye away from a potential object of jealousy.[103] And, the danger posed by the evil eye increased relative to one's fortunes, whether real or potential.[104] At Pompeii, a sign on the exterior wall of the *taberna lusoria*, a building identified as a gambling hall, depicted an amphora set between two phalli, presumably conveying both the wealth to be won inside and a precaution against envy. Another plaque, likely put up at the entrance to a house or business, contained an image of a phallus along with the phrase *hic habitat felicitas* (happiness lives here), while the front of a separate private home was adorned with a sixty-four centimeter (~2 foot) phallus carved from local stone and painted red.[105]

Protective measures on the exterior wall of a house separated the external viewer—one who might be envious—from the good fortune of those who dwelt within the house. For the viewer, the doorway, which was open to the street, functioned like a frame, highlighting the interior atrium and the household rituals that occurred there. In some houses, such as the House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii, the doorway initiated a line of sight that progressed through the main architectural spaces of the house: the fauces, atrium, tablinum, and peristyle.[106] Since the door revealed the status of those who lived

103 Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales*, V.7.681f–682a. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans*, 96, 168; V. Dasen, "Probaskania: Amulets and Magic in Antiquity," in *The Materiality of Magic*, 186–187; S. Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 147–49.

104 C. Johns, *Sex or Symbol: Erotic Images of Greece and Rome* (London: British Museum, 1982), 62–75. B. Kellum, "The Phallus as Signifier: The Forum of Augustus and Rituals of Masculinity," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, ed. N. Kampen and B.A. Bergmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 174. M. Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges dans l'antiquité romaine* (Paris: Hermann éditeurs, 2010), 28–43; A. Alvar Nuño, *Envidia y fascinación. El mal de ojo en el occidente romano* (2012): 164–85.

105 Phallic bas-relief with inscription: RP Inv. no. 27741; J.R. Clarke, *Looking at Laughter: Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 72–73. Giant phallus: Regio IX, Insula V, RP Inv. no. 113415.

106 A. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Social Structure of the Roman House," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 56 (1988): 82–84; A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994) 44–45; B. Bergmann, "The Roman House as Memory Theater: The House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii," *The Art Bulletin* 76 (1994): 245; S. Hales, *The Roman House and Social Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36; J. Hartnett, *The Roman Street: Urban Life and Society in Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 188–92.

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within, passers-by, even more so than visitors to the house, could threaten the residents.[107] The phallus prevented the gaze of the envious from afflicting the residents of the home. Even inside, various phalli in forms such as sculptures, figurines, and *tintinnabula*—suspended decorations that combined an image of the phallus with hanging bells—would have been used as decorations; these provided complimentary protection against visitors or clients, who came to the house to pay respect to their patron (on interior architectural decoration, see below).[108]

Greek and Roman sources also detail the special attention paid to the threshold and door, largely directed at preventing the entrance of malign forces, both real and non-corporeal. Apollo, the god of the doorway for the Greeks, was propitiated to repel mice and protect the house, but other, more sinister forces may have waited outside.[109] Authors of poetry and prose attest to a variety of objects that might be buried beneath the threshold, presumably to dissuade entrance or to invite good fortune. A fragment of the fifth century playwright Aristophanes mentions the placement of a sea-onion beneath the threshold, while Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, states that the head of a python buried beneath the threshold brings fortune, while the genitals of a black dog repel sorcery.[110] A similar belief may lie behind a spell preserved in the Greek Magical Papyri, a modern collection of ancient ritual documents from Greek, Roman, and Late Antique Egypt. In *PGM* XII.96, a spell for prosperity, the practitioner is told to bury an egg near the threshold of his home and recite a spell. The burial of power objects beneath the threshold is attested archaeologically in much later periods, such as the late medieval and early modern eras, where dogs or cats occasionally were deposited to protect the home.[111]

The visible elements of the door-frame also were decorated or adorned to secure ritually the entryway. The doorposts and lintels could be hung, smeared or anointed with materials to ensure protection. Local householders celebrated

107 A. Wilburn, "The Archaeology of Ritual in the Domestic Sphere: Case Studies from Karanis and Pompeii," in A. Parker and S. Mckie, *Material Approaches to Roman Magic: Occult Objects and Supernatural Substances* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2018), 103–14.

108 For numerous examples from Pompeii, see Clarke, *Looking at Laughter*, 69–70; C. Merkouri, *Baskanos Ophthalmos: Symbola Mageias apo idiotikes Archaeologikes Sylloges* (Athens: 2010), 62, figs. 13–14.

109 H.S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 299.

110 M.B. Ogle, "The House-Door in Greek and Roman Religion and Folk-Lore," *American Journal of Philology* 32 (1911): 254. On the head of a serpent: Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, 29.67; on the black dog: Pliny *Historia Naturalis*, 30.82.

111 R. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1987), 119, 125, 128–30; O. Davies, "The Material Culture of Post-Medieval Domestic Magic in Europe: Evidence, Comparisons and Interpretations," in *The Materiality of Magic*, 379–417, 390–91.

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the Anthesteria, an Athenian festival at which the dead were said to roam the streets, by smearing their doorposts with pitch to prevent the entrance of spirits. Dioscorides Pedanius reports that placing *rhamnus* (buckthorn) at the gates of a house or in windows negated witchcraft, while Pliny informs us that smearing the doorposts with menstrual blood and barley confounded the tricks of sorcerers.[112]

The doorposts and lintels of homes, like the thresholds, also could be inscribed with invocations to ward off the evil eye as well as other malign forces. From Thala in North Africa, a lintel from a house was inscribed with six ivy leaves, a phallus and the phrase *invide vive et vide ut possis plura videre*, "Envy, live and look (away?) so that you are able to see more things!"[113] This injunction was relatively common in the region, and also appeared on mosaics.[114] The most prevalent invocation against evil appears to have been an inscription invoking Herakles Kallinikos ("resplendent in victory"), cited by Diogenes Sinopensis Epistulae: "the son of Zeus, Herakles Kallinikos lives within; let no evil enter!"[115] Archaeological attestations are common, and the inscription appears, with very little modification, in such diverse places as Thasos, Pompeii and Kurdistan (Illustration 20.9).[116] A Latin version, which invokes Hercules Invictus, is also attested, and the prevalence of the inscription even led to a parody of the emperor Commodus, which is preserved in Cassius Dio.[117] According to Diogenes Laertius, newly married couples inscribed this text above the doorframe to ensure the protection of their new homes.[118] Similar Greek inscriptions also appear on movable objects such as rings or amulets, and indeed, the first attestation is on the reverse side of a Hellenistic mask discovered at the site of Gela on Sicily, and likely hung beside or above the door.[119]

In the Late Antique context, doorways and lintels continued to be used for protective purposes, seeking the assistance of Christ or the angels for

112 Dioscorides Pedanius I.119; Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, 28.85, 28.104.

113 *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* VIII, 11683; for further examples see P.P. Perdrizet, "Inscription chrétienne de Dokimion," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, 24 (1900): 291–99.

114 Dunbabin and Dickie, "*Invidia Rumpantur Pectora*," 26 n. 191 for bibliography.

115 O. Weinrich, "De dis ignotis quaestiones selectae," *Archiv für Religionwissenschaft* 18 (1915): 8–9; Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses*, 13 n. 5, 58, 69 n. 39.

116 Weinrich, "De dis ignotis quaestiones selectae," 13–14; further bibliography at L. Robert, "Échec au mal," *Hellenica* 13 (1965): 265–71.

117 Weinrich, "De dis ignotis quaestiones selectae," 14, Cassius Dio, LXXII 20,3.

118 Diogenes Laertes, VI 50; cf. *Gnomologia Vaticanus*, no. 564.

119 C. Gallivotti, "L'oscillo di Gela," *Helikon* 17 (1977): 123–25; for other objects, see F.J. Dölger, *Ἰχθύς: Das Fischsymbol in frühchristlicher Zeit*, 5 vols. (Rome: Spithöver, 1910), 239–57. Robert, "Échec au mal"; A. Barb, "Magica Varia," *Syria* 49 (1972): 343–70.

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ILLUSTRATION 20.9 Inscription invoking Herakles Kallinikos, CIL IV 733, from Pompeii, V.2.7, now in Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO—MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE DI NAPOLI

supernatural assistance. A Late Antique papyrus amulet from Oxyrhynchus calls on a variety of divinities, including Hor (Horus) and Christ, to protect the house from scorpions and other evils, both human and spiritual.[120] A gold lamella from Phthiotis in Thessaly, invokes a variety of angels to protect the house and souls of John and Georgia. The gold sheet was said to have been discovered in a grave, but the artifact preserves a series of five small pinholes that may have been used to mount the object, either within or outside the house.[121]

Beginning in the fifth century CE, the lintels over the main doors of houses in Syria were inscribed with Christian symbols, biblical verses and prayers. There is a sizable corpus of lintel blocks inscribed with roundels, raised squares or discs that circumscribe a cross, chi-rho, or the letters alpha and omega.[122]

120 M. Meyer and R. Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), 50, no. 26. See also Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 48–49, no. 25; C.A. Faraone, *Vanishing Acts on Ancient Greek Amulets: From Oral Performance to Visual Design* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2012), 13–14; A.T. Wilburn, "A Wall Painting at Karanis Used for Architectural Protection: The Curious Case of Harpocrates and Toutou in Granary C65," in *Das Fayum in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit, May 4–7, 2011*, ed. C. Arlt and M. Stadler (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 192–93. Compare similar spells meant to bind scorpions: *PGM* XXVIIIa, XXVIIIb, XXVIIIc.

121 R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze "Lamellae": Text and Commentary* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 220–31, no. 41.

122 W.K. Prentice, "Magical Formulae on Lintels of the Christian Period in Syria," *American Journal of Archaeology* 10 (1906): 138; S. Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural in*

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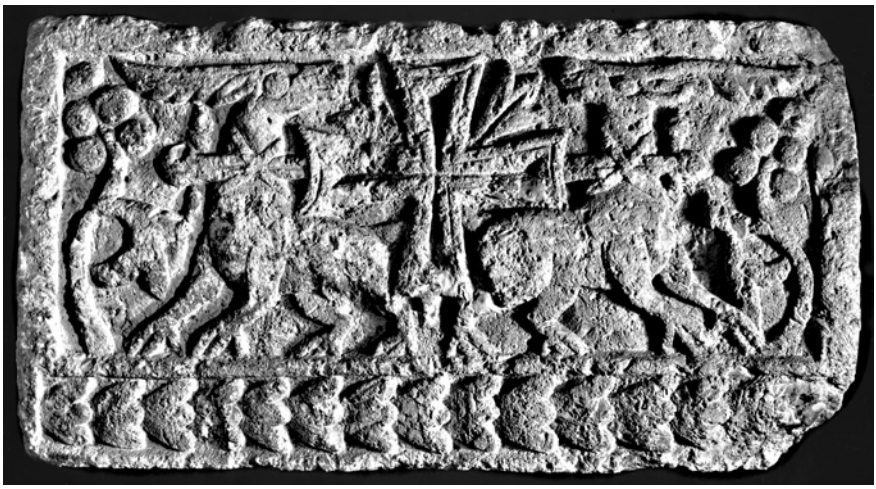

ILLUSTRATION 20.10 Frieze, "Cross Between Antelope" (BZ.1940.61)
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A lintel from Sabbâ, precisely dated to 546 CE, is inscribed with a series of two or three crosses and disks and the declaration "Of this house (the) Lord shall guard the entrance and exits: for the cross being set before, no malignant eye shall prevail [against it]." Other inscriptions explicitly invoke the Christian god as a means of repelling evil forces, so that, for example, a fifth century CE inscription from Dêr Sambil invokes Christ as victory and orders Satan to flee.[123] Christian inscriptions could also draw upon local artistic and religious traditions. A frieze from Dumbarton Oaks depicts a Coptic cross that is supported on the backs of a pair of antelopes, one on each side, that look back towards the cross (Illustration 20.10). The Coptic lintel appropriates the imagery of Horus cippi, in which the antelopes represent the desert and chaos, for use within a patently Christian apotropaic device, asserting the power of Christ over the forces of evil as conceived by traditional Egyptian iconography.[124] Like the traditional inscriptions that preceded them, the phrases and invocations used on Christian lintels are echoed with striking similarities in contemporary amulets, used for bodily rather than domestic protection, indicating that these protective phrases were transportable between media. Individuals could

Fourth-Century Syria (London: Routledge, 2007), 109. For further examples, see E. Peterson, "Papyri Osloenses," *Theologische Literaturezeitung* 51 (1926): 34–37.

123 Prentice, "Magical Formulae on Lintels of the Christian Period in Syria," 140–41.

124 Frankfurter, "The Binding of Antelopes," 97–98, 108–9.

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assure themselves of ritual safety within the house and when they left their domicile to go out into the dangerous exterior.

5 The Floor

Within the walls of the building or house, living space was marked by the presence of a floor. This could be as simple as beaten earth, compressed over years of occupation, or as complex as a decorative mosaic. While the walls differentiate the lived space from the exterior, and compartmentalize the interior into rooms, the floor attests to the presence of residents, as they constantly walk, sit, and sleep upon it. The floor, then, was in constant contact with residents, and as such, was used as a location for symbols or for ritual acts. Items were buried beneath the floor (as we noted with Mesopotamian figurines), the floor may have been graced with decoration, or artifacts could have been placed upon it to ensure the sanctity of the space.

Like the image of the phallus placed on an exterior wall or the invocation to Herakles inscribed on a lintel, the floor of the entryway was often decorated with apotropaic imagery. This served a similar purpose as the other protective devices that enclosed the doorway and building. A house at Antioch, for example, was adorned with two separate, successive mosaic floors at the entrance, both of which utilized protective images (Illustration 20.11).[125] In the upper, later pavement, a depiction of the evil eye is attacked by a variety of other figures, including in a clockwise direction, gladiator's trident, a sword, a bird, a scorpion, a snake, a dog, a centipede and a panther. To the left of this composition, an ithyphallic dwarf strides away while holding two pointed objects; his phallus remains pointed backwards, towards the eye. Above the dwarf is the Greek inscription καὶ σύ.[126] This phrase can be translated as "you also" and may instruct malign spirits approaching the house to suffer the same fate as the evil eye, or it may wish good fortune to those entering or leaving the house, as if completed with the phrase χαῖρε.[127] Each of these images individually would have warded off envy: the eye assaulted by wild beasts warns of the fate

125 On the Antioch mosaic pavements, see Levi, "The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback"; D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), 28–34; L. Trentin, *The Hunchback in Hellenistic and Roman Art* (London; Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 55–57.

126 Levi, "The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback," 220–24, provides a detailed discussion of each animal. Many of the animals are also attested as part of Mithraic cult images.

127 Levi, "The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback," 225, nn. 66–67; Trentin, *The Hunchback in Hellenistic and Roman Art*, 55. The inscription is also attested in another mosaic from

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ILLUSTRATION 20.11 Antioch, House of Evil Eye Mosaic, Hatay Arkeoloji Müzesi, Antakya, Inv.-Nr. 1024.
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suffered by the envious, while the misshapen dwarf and his phallus divert the malign gaze. The earlier mosaic (replaced on account of damage or the belief that its protective power was insufficient) featured a hunchbacked dwarf who was paired with Herakles, shown as a young child strangling two snakes.[128] The image of a representation of envy, under attack by a variety of animals and weapons, is known from other mosaics as well as other media.[129] A mosaic from the island of Kephallonia depicts a personified image of Envy (named in the inscription), shown strangling himself with his hands while wild beasts

Antioch, one that shows an ithyphallic satyr. R. Stillwell, *Antioch-on-the-Orontes II: The Excavations, 1933–1936* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1938), 185, no. 49.

128 Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, 29–33.

129 M. Bailliot, *Magie et sortilèges dans l'antiquité romaine*, 54–55; Alvar Nuño, *Envidia y fascinación*, 127–29.

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ILLUSTRATION 20.12 Image from the private bath, Casa di Menandro (I.10.4), Pompeii
IMAGE CREDIT: GEORGE TATGE. ALINARI / ART RESOURCE, NY. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO POMPEI, MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLA ATTIVÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO

rend his flesh.[130] Comparable imagery appears on portable amulets, allowing individuals to protect their bodies from the harmful gaze of the envious.[131]

The dwarf, which appears in both iterations, was an effective apotropaic device due to his unusual appearance, for the dwarf caused laughter in the viewer, dispelling envy and averting the evil eye.[132] Other unusual body-types were likewise intended to produce amusement for apotropaic effect. Several private baths in elite homes in Pompeii feature macro-phallic black men who are depicted as swimmers and bath attendants (Illustration 20.12). The combination of an unusual physical form and the erect phallus worked in tandem to ward off evil.[133] The owners presumably employed these figures within the

130 Dunbabin and Dickie, *Invidia Rumpantur Pectora*, 8–9.

131 Faraone, *Vanishing Acts*, 74.

132 Levi, "The Evil Eye and the Lucky Hunchback," 225; Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans*, 168–72.

133 J. Clarke, "Hypersexual Black Men in Augustan Baths: Ideal Somatotypes and Apotropaic Magic," in *Sexuality in Ancient Art*, 192.

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mosaics to decorate an enviable portion of their home: the private bathing facility. The location for these mosaics may have been selected with other reasons in mind, as multiple forms of sinister activity might be found in baths. The beauty of the nude bathers could attract the evil eye, or one could fall victim to a demon that haunted the bathing facility.[134]

The practice of embedding apotropaic images within mosaic floors continued into the Late Antique period, and a recently excavated house in the city of Butrint (ancient Buthrotum) in southern Albania can provide a unique glimpse into a protective program employed during this era. In the late fourth and fifth century, the occupants outfitted the entrance of the Tri-Conch House, a palatial structure that was clearly the residence of a local patrician, with a mosaic that included an oversized image of an eye and a series of knots of Solomon, another device known for its protective qualities.[135] Another nearby mosaic featured a series of three crosses.[136] Each of these architectural elements acted to protect the inhabitants of the domus, both against the approach of malign spirits, and from individuals who might view this resplendent house with envy. The Tri-Conch house, however, has also yielded a series of amulets that were presumably worn by residents or visitors. Among these objects, but found in the spoil heap and without accurate context, was a double-sided pendant showing a horseman spearing a demonic victim on one side, and the evil eye assailed by wild creatures on the other. Moreover, a bone plaque depicting a hunting dog leaping over a depiction of an eye was discovered in the 5th century construction levels of the peristyle.[137] The artifacts would have been used by the elite residents of the house, or perhaps, in the case of the double-sided pendant, squatters who later occupied the structure. In either context, these amulets suggest that residents employed an array of protective devices in their daily lives, ones that would serve to ensure both the safety of the home and sanctity of their bodies when they were outside of—as well as within—the home.

134 K. Dunbabin, "*Baiarum Grata Voluptas*: Pleasures and Dangers of the Baths," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 57 (1989): 33–35.

135 For a discussion of the structure and its history, see W. Bowden and J. Mitchell, "The Triconch Palace at Butrint: The Life and Death of a Late Roman Domus," in *Housing in Late Antiquity: From Palaces to Shops*, ed. L. Lavan, L. Özgenel, and A.C. Sarantis (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007).

136 J.P. Mitchell, "Towards an Archaeology of Performance," in *Cult in Context: Reconsidering Ritual in Archaeology*, ed. D.A. Barrowclough and C. Malone (Exeter, UK: Oxbow, 2007), 282–83.

137 Mitchell, "Towards an Archaeology of Performance," 289–97. A number of other amulets with Christian and pagan imagery were also discovered in the house, particularly in levels that post-date the main occupation of the house and suggest use by later, perhaps transient, residents.

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Movable objects within the house could also be used to impart protection to a structure. Dating to the fifth to the eighth centuries CE, more than 1500 bowls inscribed with formulae written in Aramaic, Mandaic and Syriac have been discovered in present-day Iraq and Iran. (for detailed analysis of these artifacts, see above, Bohak, Chapter 16). In form, the artifacts are relatively simple—a buff clay bowl with straight sides has been inscribed with writing in a spiral, often moving inwards from the rim to the center of the bowl. One bowl of unknown provenance clearly indicates its function in relation to the house: "this bowl is designed for sealing and guarding the house, the dwelling and the body of Huna son of Kupitay, so that tormentors, bad dreams, curses, vows, spells, magic practices, devils, demons, liliths, encroachments and terrors should leave him alone."[138] Other examples have been discovered *in situ*, where they were placed in the corners or rooms, or along the walls, often face-down, presumably to trap demons who, like mice, might enter through spaces in the walls. On a small number of the bowls, the exteriors are inscribed with the intended location, which includes direct reference to rooms within the house, such as "in the kitchen" or "for the bedroom."[139] While the bowls have a limited temporal and geographic range (and are not attested after the eighth century) in Mesopotamia and Iran, they suggest that the house could be protected by artifacts that were not built into the structure, but instead could be transported from place to place.

At points where the residents believed themselves especially vulnerable to malign forces, apotropaic devices could supplement the physical barrier afforded by the built enclosure. As Prentice noted in 1906, "evil spirits, however ethereal, do not penetrate solid walls, but like the rest of us, enter by the door, or perhaps through a window."[140] Protective images decorated each of the architectural elements of the entrance of the home—the lintel, the entry walls, and the threshold, and could even take the form of movable objects placed at vulnerable places within the house. Dangerous forces would be repelled prior to passing above, beneath, or within these locations, providing safety and security for the residents.

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138 Trans. *CTBS* 229, no. 122. J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1913), 242–43, no. 37; J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1993), 124–32, bowl 1.

139 G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 185. Cf. David Frankfurter, "Scorpion/Demon: On the Origin of the Mesopotamian Apotropaic Bowl," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74, 1 (2015): 9–18.

140 Prentice, "Magical Formulae on Lintels of the Christian Period in Syria," 138.

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6 The Roof

The roof is a notoriously troublesome element of the house. Architecturally, it must span the space within the enclosure, and provide covering for the residents. When this distance was too great, columns or pillars were used on the interior of the structure to lend support to the internal beams that held up the roof. From an archaeological standpoint, the decay and destruction of the house is almost always accompanied by the collapse of the roof. Excavation uncovers the roof as part of the lower stories of the house, sometimes jumbled together with the material upon which it fell. The roof provided protection against the elements, but it, like the doorway, was a liminal space, allowing the residents to engage with the outside world and the heavens.

The construction of the roof may have been accompanied by ritual actions intended for security and preservation. A Hittite text provides instructions for the erection of a palace, and includes rites undertaken to roof the new structure. The king travels to the mountain where the Throne rules, and requests the timber for the roof. As part of the rite, the king asks the timber to cast out any flaw, evil or curse that lies within the heart of the wood (l. 44–45), presumably to ensure that the roof will be solid, strong, and free from malign influence.[141] Similar ritual texts appear to have been employed in the construction of private houses, suggesting that ritual practices were used to increase the reliability of non-elite as well as royal buildings.[142]

The roof, like the other elements of the building, could be adorned with decorative elements, some of which may have provided protection. Akroteria, antefixes, metopes, waterspouts and pedimental sculpture in the archaic and classical periods in Greece incorporated images of gorgon heads (*gorgoneia*) as part of their decorative repertoire. In form, the *gorgoneion* is a disembodied female head, often shown with bulging eyes and an extended tongue, surrounded by locks of snaky hair, and identified with the mythological gorgons or with the specific gorgon Medusa. The earliest consistent use of the *gorgoneion* occurred in the Greek west during the first quarter of the sixth century,

141 *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi* (Berlin: Vorderasiatische Abteilung der Staatl. Museen, 1938) = KUB XXIX, duplicated at KUB XXIX 2 and 3. See Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 357–8; B. Schwartz, "A Hittite Ritual Text (Kub 29.1 = 1780/C)," *Orientalia* 16 (1947): 23–55.

142 A. Ünal, "'You Should Build for Eternity' New Light on the Hittite Architects and Their Work," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 40 (1988): 102.

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ILLUSTRATION 20.13 Gorgoneion from the pediment of the Temple of Artemis at Corcyra, 600–580 BCE.
SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY.

particularly in Campania and Magna Graecia, and at Etruscan sites in Etruria.[143] Among the cities of the mainland, those with close ties to the west appear to been the earliest adopters of the style. Positioned along the sides of the structure, the gorgon heads would have protected the temple from those approaching from all directions. The embodied gorgon was also used as the central pedimental motif for several archaic Greek temples, most famously the temple of Artemis at Corcyra, where the Gorgon is shown accompanied by two panthers (Illustration 20.13).[144] While some scholars have viewed the scene as an

143 J.D. Belson, "The Gorgoneion in Greek Architecture," (PhD diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1981), 183–84.

144 G. Rodenwaldt, *Korkyra: Archaische Bauten und Bildwerke* (Gebr. Mann 1939), 16–55.

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example of narrative sculpture, its role as an apotropaic device, gazing out at those approaching the temple, is both literally and figuratively central.[145]

The roof features prominently in ritual performances, both those meant to safeguard the residents of the home and those intended to harm another. A flat roof could provide additional living and sleeping spaces for residents, particularly in the warm, dry months. Mounting the roof, the ritual specialist could view the cosmos or address the heavens, calling on the gods or other spirits for assistance. The liminal nature of the roof, which was within the walls of the house, but not inside, also made it an appropriate space for ritual enactments. During the Maqlû, or "Burning", ritual in Mesopotamia, performed by the king to eradicate witches, the practitioner is instructed to undertake parts of the rite on a rooftop: in both the first and third incantation, he invokes the divinities of the night for assistance.[146] In the Jewish tradition, worship on the rooftop could be associated with idolatry, as both Jeremiah 19:13 and Zephaniah 1:5 condemn the burning of incense to the starry or heavenly hosts. These divinities may be related to the Queen of Heaven, who was associated with female devotion in Jeremiah 7:16–20 and 44:15–29.[147] From the Greco-Roman literary world, the witch Pamphile in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* has a small room on her roof within which she performs spells; Lucius watches her transform herself into an owl and fly off.[148] The spells of the Greek and Demotic Magical Papyri, as well, include instructions to ascend a roof to perform the spell. In *PGM* I. 42–195, the practitioner goes onto a lofty roof at night to acquire an assistant. A similar location is required for a love spell of attraction at *PGM* IV. 2441–2621. In each of these instances, the roof is chosen as an appropriate locus of ritual activity as it is open to the sky and its associated divinities.[149]

145 Belson, "The Gorgoneion in Greek Architecture," 217, B.S. Ridgway, *The Archaic Style in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 193; narrative reading: G.M.A. Hanfmann, *Classical Sculpture* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1967), 311.

146 T. Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 276. See also above, Schwemer, Chapter 4.

147 S. Ackerman, "Household religion, family religion, and women's religion in ancient Israel," *Household and family religion in antiquity*, ed. J. Bodel and S. M. Olyan (Malden, MA: Blackwell), 141–45.

148 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 3.21.

149 The vagaries of preservation have often deprived us of deposits from rooftops, but at least one curious object has been discovered in recent years. At the site of Kellis, located in the Dakleh Oasis in Egypt, debris associated with the collapse of the roof of a fourth-century house also yielded a fourteen-week fetus. The fetus, which would not have been viable, was wrapped in linen cloth, and had been repeatedly encircled with a long cord. On this

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7 Architecture and Aggressive Ritual Activity

While rituals could ensure the stability of a building or protect the householder, practitioners intent on causing harm or inducing love often made use of existing architecture to implement their spells. Plato notes the importance of the entrance to the house as a place where power objects, such as figurines, might be deposited.[150] Power objects deposited within personal space were widely believed to have an adverse effect on the resident or occupier of that space. The death of Germanicus illustrates that curses were effective through proximity between the power object and its target. This idea clearly had traction in antiquity, and even in the fourth century CE, Libanius reports that he was unable to lecture effectively until he had removed a lizard, grotesquely twisted in what appears to have been a binding spell, from his lecture room.[151] These literary accounts do not merely record the fears expressed by prominent philosophers, historians, and intellectuals, but point to the reality of aggressive rites in antiquity. The association between resident and residence was a vital component for the efficacy of a spell.

An object intended to bind a victim might be deposited beneath the threshold or in the vicinity of the home if the practitioner wished to attack an individual or his business. In the *Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John*, Sophronius records that Theodorus of Cyprus was incapacitated by an object that was buried beneath his threshold. When the object had been removed, he was cured, and the perpetrator destroyed.[152] In an industrial area of the Athenian agora, excavators discovered a lead tablet in the decayed mudbrick of the house, one that had probably been buried beneath the floor. The tablet was inscribed with a curse against four men, Aristaichmos, Purias, Sosians, Alegosi and Agesion, a woman.[153] The text may identify the first two individuals as bronze workers; the building in which the tablet was discovered contained a hearth and metal working implements.[154] The entrance to the city could be employed like a

artifact, see D. Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt," *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62.

150 Plato, *Leges*, XI. 933B.

151 Libanius, *Orationes*, 1.245–50, see C. Bonner, "Witchcraft in the Lecture Room of Libanius," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 63 (1932): 177–87.

152 Sophronius, *Account of the Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John, Patrologia Graeca* vol. 87.3, col. 3625, *CTBS*, no. 166 = Jean Gascou, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Miracles des saints Cyr et Jean* (Paris: De Boccard, 2006), no. 55.

153 R.S. Young, "An Industrial District of Ancient Athens," *Hesperia* 20 (1951): 222–23.

154 C. Faraone, "Aphrodite's Kestos and Apples for Atalanta: Aphrodisiacs in Early Greek Myth and Ritual," *Phoenix* 44 (1990): 23, n. 9.

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domestic threshold, and a tablet discovered near the gateway of the settlement of Barchin del Hoyo, in the Cuenca region of Spain, curses two residents.[155]

Deposition at the threshold or around the door of a victim's home appears to have been especially important for love spells. In Jerome's *Life of Saint Hilarion the Hermit*, a virgin is driven mad by a love spell placed underneath the threshold of her door by an amorous pagan suitor.[156] This technique is echoed in the magical papyri, where, in *PDM* lxi 112–127, the practitioner is told to bury an image of Osiris made of wax along with the hair and wool of a donkey and the bone of a lizard beneath the doorsill of the desired woman.[157] *PGM* IV 1390–1495, a love spell of attraction, instructs the practitioner to throw dirt from a cemetery or battlefield into the house of the victim. Spells of amorous separation also made use of the victim's door, and in a Demotic spell, the practitioner wraps the dung of an unknown animal in a document that is also inscribed with mystical names, and deposits this package beneath the doorsill of the target's house.[158] In each of these spells, the physical structure of the house is used to identify the resident, who is then drawn by ritual means to the home of the practitioner.

Like the house, other architectural features were selected as appropriate locations for curses because of proximity. Curses directed at charioteers might be deposited at the starting gates or in the *spina* of a local circus. A tablet from Lepcis Magna, for example, that curses a team of horses and its charioteer was discovered beneath the starting gates.[159] Similarly, the provenance of a tablet from Beirut, Syria, can be attributed to the ancient racecourse, and invokes curses against the horses and charioteers of the Blue faction.[160] The bath, too, was frequently chosen as an appropriate location for cursing, not only since

155 J.B. Curbera, M.S. Delage, and I. Velázquez, "A Bilingual Curse Tablet from Barchín Del Hoyo (Cuenca, Spain)," *ZPE* 125 (1999): 279–83; NGCT no. 89. cf. SGD no. 129 = *CTBS* no. 79, which curses the city of Rome and Italy, and was deposited near the Adreatina gate.

156 Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 23, col. 38.

157 *GMPT*, 290. The spell uses what Faraone has termed erotic attraction magic, and the house door provides the physical location where the spell was enacted as well as the intended destination of the victim. C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 56.

158 *PDM* xii. 50–61 / *PGM* XII. 445–448. A similar rite is included in the so-called "Eighth Book of Moses" (*PGM* XIII 1–343), where the practitioner is instructed to smear dog's excrement in the post-hole of the victim's home. *PDM* xiv 376–94 instructs the practitioner to loose a gilded shrew in the door of the bathroom of a woman whom the practitioner wishes to attract.

159 J. Rea, "Aspects of the Circus at Lepcis Magna, Appendix: The Lead Curse Tablet," *Libya Antiqua* 9–10 (1972): 9–10.

160 SGD no. 167; *CTBS* no. 5.

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baths were a notorious haunt of ghosts, but also because the victim could be a visitor to the establishment, and therefore encounter the curse and the demons that it called upon. A lead tablet from Ashmunein, for example, calls upon a demon to draw a woman named Gorgonia to the baths; the demon will then assume the guise of a bath attendant and enflame the target of the spell, Sophia, with love.[161] In the *PGM*, practitioners are required to deposit an object in the baths, presumably for similar reasons: to draw upon the resident spirits and entrap the victim.[162] In the enactment of each of these spells, the architectural unit is of vital importance, locating the ritual act and directing the spirit world through physical association.

8 Conclusion

For both public and private buildings, ancient builders employed various rituals to protect and secure the living and working spaces of residents. Ritual enactments often preceded or accompanied construction, and power objects were left in place to support and sustain buildings, while also providing protection to those who dwelled within. Initial rituals directed to safety and health might be renewed, particularly when death or sickness threatened the residents. The foundation figurines placed beneath the Mesopotamian temple became part of the foundation—the images were equally responsible for the maintenance and support of the structure as the foundation stones. Throughout the life of a building, ancient individuals believed that the structure was susceptible to attack from outside forces; spirits and demons lurked around windows, doors, and seams, looking for an entrance by which to torment those inside. Decoration placed on the exterior of a building was integrated fully into the function of the wall; images or inscriptions intended to ward off malign forces or the evil eye separated the inhabitants from the outside world and the harmful forces that it contained. Through use, the viewer or resident continually activated architectural features. Reading an inscription above a lintel repeated the protective spell, just as the process of opening the door fitted with the bound prisoner motif at Hierakonpolis replicated the torture of demonic forces.

Anxiety about malign forces was not simply paranoia. Our evidence suggests ritual specialists may have actively used the home—particularly doorways and thresholds—for aggressive purposes. The same architectural components

161 *Suppl. Mag.* 42 (= PSI I.28). For discussion, see Dunbabin, "*Baiarum Grata Voluptas*," 37.
162 *PGM* VII. 467–77; XXXVI. 69–101; XXXVI. 333–60.

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that ensured protection for residents could also be turned against the householder. The doorway, like the window, was liminal—neither inside nor outside, and accessible by residents and passersby alike. While the threshold in front of a building might be adorned with imprecations against the evil eye, literary sources indicate that doorways were frequent targets of aggressive ritual activity. What becomes clear from this spatial overlap between protection and aggression is that place—the inhabited location—played a vital role in how rituals were believed to operate. Proximity between a spell and its target (or between protective rites and those who were enfolded) was fundamental to efficacy.

The fluid relationship between ritual and architecture is illustrated by rituals that repurposed existing architectural spaces for new uses. The Late Antique period witnessed exceptional religious diversity. Christians and Jews tended to proclaim their own religious identities vociferously while distancing themselves from what they considered inappropriate practices.[163] Simple crosses incised in the lintels of private houses at Jeme indicated that the resident adhered to the Christian faith, but these also protected the citizens from malign forces.[164] While a small number of temples may have been destroyed through violent means, several buildings, formerly home to temples to traditional gods, were remodeled to fit a new Christian audience, although this process may have occurred after a significant intervening period.[165] Many of the old temples were left to decay, and often only small portions of a temple, such as the pronaos, may have been reused. Decorations could aid this transformation: inscribed crosses were carved into temple walls by churchmen and visitors, visually and ritually altering the space. That the power of the cross could transform and protect large public edifices as well as private ones is attested by Athanasius, who, in his *Life of St. Antony*, tells us "where one sees the sign of the cross, magic loses its power, and sorcery has no effect."[166] As in

163 D.M. Gwynn and S. Bangert, "Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity: An Introduction," in *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, ed. D.M. Gwynn and S. Bangert (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 1, 6; L. Lavan, "The End of the Temples: Towards a New Narrative," in *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'*, ed. L. Lavan and M. Mulryan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), lv.

164 T.G. Wilfong, *Women of Jeme: Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 11.

165 Lavan, "The End of the Temples," xxxvii–xl. J.H.F. Dijkstra, "The Fate of Temples in Late Antique Egypt," in *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'*, 304–5; 330; P. Talloen and L. Vercauteren, "The Fate of Temples in Late Antique Anatolia," in *The Archaeology of Late Antique 'Paganism'*, 368–72; J. Vaes, "Christliche wiederverwendung antiker Bauten: Ein Forschungbericht," *Ancient Society* 15–17 (1984–1986): 305–443.

166 *Patrologia Graeca* 26: 952. Compare the imperial decree dated to 396 CE that stated traditional religious sites could be purified through signs of Christianity: *CTh* XVI.10.25, cited at

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earlier periods, ritual activities and decorative elements continued to transform, cleanse, purify, and protect architecture and its inhabitants.

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PART 4

Dimensions of a Category Magic

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CHAPTER 21

Introduction

David Frankfurter

To quote Henk Versnel once again, "magic does not exist, nor does religion. What do exist are our definitions of these concepts."[1] It is an empty category, and ours for the filling, whether with a definition or simply parameters. The problem, however, lies in how we should fill it or critically guide its usage. As the introductory essay explained, the term fails repeatedly as a term of classification when it intrinsically separates a magic from religion, rationality, practicality, or some other area of practice or epistemology. It is when magic serves as a class for activities or objects that some other class excludes that our post-Reformation biases come rushing in. Then magic ends up implying the primitive, the superstitious, the idolatrous, the erroneous, the infantile, or the Catholic (or Jewish).

But can magic have meaning and utility *not* as a class but as a *quality* of social or material dynamics or of communication itself? Could it serve as a heuristic term that could highlight for our critical appreciation and analysis specific features of speech, say, or of charismatic status? In their 1994 collection of Greek and Coptic ritual texts Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith proposed "ritual power" as an alternative to magic, meant to capture both what innumerable ancient ritual procedures claimed themselves to create and also the transformations that take place in the course of rituals, as patients are blessed, victims cursed, and subjects empowered.[2] For Meyer and Smith "ritual power" could both replace the term magic and indicate the proper parameters of a concept magic. Magic would thus pertain to any expression of power that emits from rituals, whether trans-substantiated Eucharists or blessed sheep, binding assemblages and healing elixirs.

But are these helpful parameters? For one thing, there is some circularity in inferring ritual procedures from every artifact or circumstance we might want to investigate as magical: a scripture amulet? Protection from the evil eye? Not everything archaeologically or textually anomalous implies specific

1 H.S. Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic—Religion," *Numen* 38, no. 2 (1991): 177.

2 Marvin W. Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), 5–6.

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rituals. In its capaciousness and generosity to insiders' perspectives "ritual power" also conveys a rather spiritual sensibility—useful for contemporary Neopagan practitioners to describe their experiences but less so for historians of religions.[3]

Instead, this section offers parameters based on (a) specific aspects of culture that carry an efficacy or agency beyond what is immediately perceivable: writing, speech, and materiality itself; and (b) social and historical situations that involve shifts, transformations, and tensions in which roles and relationships become ambiguous. The term magic thus functions in a heuristic, qualitative, even aesthetic sense rather than a strictly demarcated classificatory sense. We can talk about the "magic of liturgy" or the "magic of the written word" as observations that open our eyes to functions and qualities—readily and routinely understood by our historical subjects—that we would not assume from our own (modern, literate, western) cultural vantage.

It is notable that the first two magical features reflect on cultural understandings of the spoken word and the written word—that is, on the powers attributed (by *literati* as much as folk) to the sounds and technologies of communication: charm, blessing, *historiola*; amulet, written name, *charaktēr*. The third essay, on the magic of materiality, reflects new trends in anthropology, archaeology, and the study of religion that examine the agencies in objects, both within and beyond rituals: how one "assembles" objects to convey agency, how the agencies of images and things can pose both danger and presence. Then two essays on ancient ritual systems—mysticism and theurgy—tackle the problem of how material or acoustic magical technologies were understood to function in individual ritual efforts at some sort of transcendence. Spinning a *ỳnx*-wheel, chanting divine names—such practices were integral to ancient theurgy and mysticism as much as they involved magical features. "Transcendence"—if such a word can be used—does not eschew the material or the technical.

The last two essays concern social situations that give rise to magical status. In the first, the materials, traditions, and liturgical elements of a Great Tradition—a Judaism or Christianity or even Egyptian temple religion, as imagined, performed, or constructed—acquire magical ambiguity and power when reenacted in local culture or when drawn into the local domain as symbols of a greater authority. In the last, situations of social tension (conflict,

3 On the value of unspecific terms like "power" to describe experiences in neopagan culture see Tanya M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 176–79, 214–18.

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accusation, frustration) lead to both the imagination of others' ritual aggression and the performance of the same.

These aspects of culture and of social transition, these parameters of magic, are laid out in this final section of the *Guide* as tentative, even provocative observations on how the term magic can be used. They are not meant as definitive for the use or meaning of magic nor exhaustive of the range of topics that could characterize magic.[4] But they do offer thematic routes along which the study of ancient magic might proceed.

4 I mention some other themes and parameters above, in Chapter 1.

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CHAPTER 22

Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word

David Frankfurter

In what ways is "magic" an aspect of speech itself? Can we productively apply the category magic to ways, forms, or contexts of utterance?

While these questions get to the very heart of the materials historians have used to study ancient and medieval magic, it is immediately important to observe that these materials are on the whole *textual* artifacts: amulets, papyri, codices, inscriptions. Thus when we *infer* a spoken component or basis to what is written or worn, that is a hypothesis—formulated on the basis of explicit written instructions, style, or analogies in literary sources or, further afield, ethnographic studies.[1] It is important to keep this inference in mind, since some texts militate against an oral component—e.g., the impossibly long incantation in the Coptic ritual manual P. Macquarie 1[2]—and other texts, especially spell compilations, may comprise once-oral materials that have been lifted from their performative contexts and edited in a way we can only call folkloristic—out of an inclination to collect, but with no intention to direct further performances.

1 The Speech Act

In his 1962 book *How To Do Things With Words* the philosopher J.L. Austin proposed a category of performative utterances, or "speech acts" that under the right conditions would effectively change a situation in the world: the christening of a boat or a child, the minister's pronouncement of husband and wife over an unmarried couple, a judge's pronouncement of guilt over an

1 Cf. Christopher Faraone, "Hexametrical Incantations as Oral and Written Phenomena," in *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy, and Religion*, ed. A.P.M.H. Lardinois, J.H. Blok, and M.G.M. van der Poel, Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World 8 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 191–204; with ethnographic examples in Barbara Kerewsky Halpern and John Miles Foley, "The Power of the Word: Healing Charms as an Oral Genre," *Journal of American Folklore* 91 (1978): 903–24; and Jonathan Roper, ed., *Charms and Charming in Europe* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994).

2 See Malcolm Choat and Iain Gardner, eds., *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power* (*P. Macq. I 1*), Macquarie Papyri 1 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2013).

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accused person, and a doctor's pronouncement of death over a body hitherto undergoing resuscitation efforts.[3] In every such case the words fundamentally change the constitutive status of the person or object in regard to society. The conditions, Austin pointed out, are crucial: the officiating figure must have the authority to make the statement; the object of the declaration must be in the appropriately receptive and situational condition for the change; and the declaration itself must be uttered according to tradition or canon to be effective.[4] Finally, Austin offered further categories for the classification of speech acts and their efficacy: an *illocutionary* speech act (as opposed to a generic *locution*) is one that accomplishes in the world what it declares verbally; while the *perlocutionary* act is the capacity of the utterance to cause change in other actors.[5]

This framework for understanding the actual force of speech forms in the world—that declarative and other such speech acts are far more than grammatical formulas—was consequently taken up by another philosopher, John Searle, who expanded the ways speech acts could influence the world, even in the process of referencing the world;[6] and more importantly for the field of religion by the anthropologist Stanley Tambiah, who brought the idea of speech acts back to ritual itself and the diverse ways that metaphor and analogy are used in ritual contexts.[7] Thus an illocutionary act in the service of a binding spell that details the numerous ways a desired sexual partner should suffer in fever and sleeplessness is not meant to transfer suffering *per se* on the victim, as the illocutionary utterance might imply, but rather a more general sense of abject anticipation and "burning for it" that leads intrinsically to resolution through coupling with the speaker.

The *functionality* of such utterances might lie in their perlocutionary effects—that is, on the speaker/client himself, who vicariously experiences his victim's anguish to be like his own.[8] But in cases of cursing, binding, or

3 J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

4 Austin, 14–15.

5 Austin, 101, 109.

6 John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); and Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," in *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, ed. Keith Gunderson, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science 7 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 344–69.

7 Stanley J. Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," in *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 60–86.

8 John J. Winkler, "The Constraints of Desire: Erotic Magical Spells," in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 71–98. My example is indebted to Lynn R. LiDonnici, "Burning for It: Erotic Spells for Fever and Compulsion in the Ancient Mediterranean World," *GRBS* 39 (1998): 63–98.

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ritual utterances performed apart from the "victim" (or indeed any sort of audience), the social requirements for speech acts' efficacy are lost. Rather, as Amina Kropp has proposed, one must presume an autonomous efficacy of correctly spoken words (as in a Vedic mantra) or a supernatural audience of divine agents. In these quasi-private binding contexts—which may in fact be rather rare in practice—the notion of felicity or efficacy itself may be moot, for the speech act model really requires some immediate social assent to the speech act's force. But Kropp has sought to classify speech acts of "binding" as effective independently of audience assent.[9]

Another application for speech acts theory entered the study of religion through the work of the Vedic scholar Wade Wheelock, who described a distinct area of *ceremonial* speech acts whose function was not to convey information but "to create and allow the participation in a known and repeatable situation"—"to engender a particular state of affairs and at the same time express recognition of its reality."[10] The redefinition of ritual objects in the Vedas—knives, fire, grain—as divine objects offered the preeminent example of this kind of speech act. But one can see it in a variety of ceremonial declarations: that a wafer is the body of Christ, that a sword is the product of a god's forge, that a hammer is that of an ancestral carpenter, that a matzah is the "bread of affliction," or famously in the Sabbath hymns from the Dead Sea Scrolls, that the heavenly temple is present and its decorations are participating in the glorification of God.[11] The efficacy of these "situating" speech acts often derives from (and is limited to) the performative situation, including participants, even the language in which it is conducted, rather than the specific authority of the speaker. That is to say, the mythological redefining of things in the ritual space (like hammers or wafers) involves the total ritual situation—right blessings, right audience, right materials, right time, as well as right person leading.

In some ritual situations like healing rites, it is the specific authority and skill of the speaker—the ritual specialist—that determines efficacy. Thus the

9 Amina Kropp, "How Does Magical Language Work? The Spells and Formulae of the Latin Defixionum Tabellae," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, ed. Richard Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón, RGRW 168 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 357–80. To some degree Kropp's model depends on Frazerian notions of magic as intrinsically instrumental—a product of natural forces—and religion as involving supernatural audiences for human desires (Kropp, 374–77), whereas the contribution of speech acts theory was to highlight social performative contexts for efficacy.

10 Wade T. Wheelock, "The Problem of Ritual Language: From Information to Situation," *JAAR* 50, no. 1 (1982): 49–71 (quotations from 59, 58).

11 Further on the Sabbath Hymns from Qumran see below, Janowitz, Chapter 25.

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anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss analyzed the extensive (transcribed) text of an incantation from early twentieth-century Panama, meant to facilitate labor.[12] The incantation narrated the advance of helpful spirits toward the realm of Muu, goddess of childbirth and disorder, and their vanquishing of monstrous opponents en route. But in telling this story the incantation also functioned to "re-tell"—to redefine—the spaces of the birth canal, the womb, the sensations that kept it closed, and the fetus itself. The incantation recast them all in mythological terms both in the experience of the suffering parturient (that is, to transform her somatic experience) and for the attendants, who would certainly have been invested in the performative application of myth to the obstetrical situation. The healer's incantation thus functions as a speech act in Wheelock's sense: not in explicitly renaming reproductive parts but in the *perlocutionary* sense of creating a narrative that does so implicitly.

Speech acts that transform things in religious ceremonies and ad-hoc ritual situations thus need not be phrased only as declarative speech acts (what Austin called "verdicatives" and "exercitives"), for narratives can carry a perlocutionary or even illocutionary force as well—creating a situation through its ritual description. And this brings us to the speech act called the *historiola*, a brief or protracted narrative recited (often in past tense) in the course of ritual (e.g., for healing, cursing, protecting, empowering), to bring into being a potency in the mythic narrative that can be applied to the situation at hand.[13] In order to link the world of myth with the situation at hand the *historiola* plays creatively with stories familiar from heritage or scripture, such as this one from a fifth-century papyrus:

> Jesus our Lord came walking [upon] the Mount of Olives in the [midst] of his twelve apostles, and he found a doe … in pain […] in labor pains. It spoke [to him in these words]: "Greetings, child of the maiden! Greetings, [firstborn of your] father and mother! You must come and help me in this time of need."

12 Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Effectiveness of Symbols," in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 186–205.

13 David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical Historiola in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Allan Mirecki (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), 457–76; David Frankfurter, "Narratives That Do Things," in *Religion: Narrating Religion*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston, Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Religion (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan, 2017), 95–106. Cf. Edina Bozóky, *Charmes et prières apotropaïques*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental 86 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 36–45.

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> [Jesus] rolled his eyes and said, "You are not able to tolerate my glory, nor to tolerate that of my twelve apostles. But though I flee, Michael the archangel will come to you with his [wand] in his hand and receive an offering of wine. [And he will] invoke my name down upon [it] with the name of the apostles, for 'whatever is crooked, let it be straight.' [Let the baby] come to the light!"[14]

Sometimes this kind of creative improvisation with mythic, authoritative characters serves to sanctify a particular remedy, object, or charm that the speaker thus introduces into the ritual—as something from the world of myth, now activated in the ritual situation. In this Coptic obstetrical *historiola* it seems that the "offering of wine" serves as that axis point between the healing powers declared in the narrative and the performative situation of healing. But across all examples of *historiolae* in ancient, medieval, and modern ritual speech, the common dynamics involve (a) an actual oral-performative setting, in which (b) a ritual specialist *articulates* a mythic situation in which a crisis parallel to "our" crisis is resolved through the interaction of gods or heroes. And from this articulation (c) the mythic powers of resolution are *mediated into* the performative situation through (1) the recitation itself and (2) the introduction of materials, names, or charms in the narrative, present in the mythic world. In one particularly complex example from the V–IV BCE Getty Hexameters, an apotropaic charm involving Heracles is framed as the words of Hecate to Paean/Apollo, which are in turn framed as the words of Paean to mortals, which are in turn framed as the words of a this-worldly ritual specialist as "not ineffective verses.[15] These mythic elements thereby enter the performative situation, often in material form. In these ways the *historiola* functions as illocutionary speech but in the ceremonial context that Wheelock described, creating and recognizing a mythic situation, and recited in the form of narrative.[16]

The principle of the illocutionary speech act or performative utterance is not that language "can" carry magical force—that is the larger purpose of this

14 *ACM* no. 49a, trans. *ACM*, p. 96.

15 Getty Hexameters 1–27. See Kathryn Caliva, "Speech Acts and Embedded Narrative Structure in the Getty Hexameters," *ARG* 17 (2015): 139–63.

16 The application of the category *historiola* to unspoken inscribed materials (like scripture), images, or literary texts seems to me unwarranted, as the *historiola* proper arises fundamentally as a form of oral illocution, in (or immediately recalling) some kind of performative context, while these other media depend on different constructions of authority and ritual efficacy. Cf. Gary Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984): 65–86; Brian Sowers, "Historiolae: Narrative Charms in Magical Texts and Literature in Late Antiquity," *History of Religions* 56, no. 4 (2017): 426–48.

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chapter—but rather that there exist certain types of speech that function in their very utterance to change things in the world, or to create a situation that invites change.

The very effectiveness of speech acts in antiquity—or, at least, popular fears of their effectiveness—emerges in a miracle legend of the fourth-century CE monk Macarius of Egypt, to whom is brought a young woman whom a suitor has transformed into a horse through some kind of spell.[17] Macarius successfully restores the woman; and yet the suitor's tactic is confusing to the modern reader: why a horse? Why would the suitor want the woman in such form? In fact, a good number of erotic binding spells from the Mediterranean world incorporate animal analogies as means of expressing the desperate state of the desired victim. For example, a Coptic master-spell from late antique Egypt commands that "N. daughter of N. may desire me like the sun, that she may love me *like* [*nthe n-*] the moon, that she may hang on me *as* [*nthe*] a drop of water sticks on a jar, that she may be *like* a honey(-bee) seeking honey,"—and here the composer drops the comparative *nthe*—"a bitch prowling, a cat going from house to house, a mare going under (sex)-crazed (stallions)."[18] While here only one of a number of efficacious analogies that cumulatively constitute the spell, in ancient literature the horse (and donkey) was widely used to express voracious sexuality and animal desire.[19] But while the extant spells seek to create in the beloved victim a sexual hunger *like* a horse (or other animal), the legend of Macarius imagines that the spell turns her actually *into* a horse. The legend serves both as a caricature of erotic binding and a comment on the efficacy of illocutionary utterances: that under the right conditions the language of analogy in the spell might result in an actual transformations.[20]

2 *Epoidē* and Charm

In contrast to the illocutionary speech act, which is a principle of language itself, the concept of "charming" revolves around a culturally-specific belief that vocal and musical sounds in themselves have a persuasive effect on people, animals, and things, and that there exist particular verses or tunes that

17 *Historia monachorum* 21.17; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 17.6–9.

18 *ACM* no. 79. Cf. *ACM* nos. 72–73.

19 See, e.g., Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.279–81; 2.481–91; Aelian, *De natura* 3.17; Apuleius, *Met.* 7.21; *1 Enoch* 86.4, 88.3.

20 See David Frankfurter, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 3/4 (2001): 480–500.

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concentrate that effect.[21] These ideas were fundamental to ancient Greek notions of magical power, as Fritz Graf writes in Chapter 7 (above), underlining the ambiguities in the use (and users) of *ep-oidai*, "songs directed at"—a suitable definition of "charm." These songs had concrete effects, as when the sons of Autolykos staunch the blood flowing from Odysseus's leg by means of an *epoidē* (*Od*. 19.457). Greek literature had a fascination with mythic figures like Medea, Circe, Orpheus, and the Sirens, whose songs and charms compelled others, and with the resemblance of their vocal powers to the sounds of the *Iynx*, a wheel that one twirled around at the end of a rope, producing a mysteriously compelling sound.[22] (One is reminded of the German tale of the Piper of Hamelin town, whose unearthly piping could draw rats away, but then—it turns out—all the children as well). Thus, whether through instruments or particular voices or particular verses or songs, charms have long been imbued with the capacity to quiet, to control, to seduce, or even to heal.[23] As biblical legend describes, "whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him" (1 Sam 16.23 NRSV). Yet even the harp's sounds could have dark, compulsive powers: a late antique Coptic legend tells of heathen priests in an Egyptian town who would string harps with Christian children's intestines, the musical strains of which would bring treasure to light.[24]

The magic of the *epoidē* extends thus to the mysteriously compelling song artfully played, epitomized in the legends of David and Solomon (and Orpheus), but also to work songs, or songs that engage the rhythms of labor and endow the actual gestures of grinding, weaving, turning, and harvesting with a range of symbolisms. Andromache Karanika has examined traditions in ancient (and modern) Greece that imbue such songs, which often carry erotic or political undertones, with a further efficacy: a magic, in fact. In this dimension of the

21 See Halpern and Foley, "Healing Charms as an Oral Genre."

22 Sarah Iles Johnston, "The Song of the Iynx: Magic and Rhetoric in Pythian 4," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 125 (1995): 177–206, and see below, Johnston, Chapter 26.

23 See Michaël Martin, "'Parler la langue des oiseaux': Les écritures 'barbares' et mystérieuses des tablettes de défixion," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*, ed. Magali De Haro Sanchez (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2015), 251–67.

24 D.W. Johnson, *A Panegyric on Macarius, Bishop of Tkow, Attributed to Dioscorus of Alexandria*, CSCO 415–16 (Louvain: CSCO, 1980), chap. v.2; See David Frankfurter, "Illuminating the Cult of Kothos: The Panegryic on Macarius and Local Religion in Fifth-Century Egypt," in *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity: Language, Literature, and Social Context: Essays in Honor of David W. Johnson*, ed. James E. Goehring and Janet Timbie (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 184–87.

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work-song tradition, the combined elements of rhythmic gesture, the transformation of material (grain, milk, clay), and declarative verses can also compel a "victim" to act in a certain way.[25] Faraone has discussed one such incantation from the Greek Magical Papyri that revolves around the grinding of salt: "Just as the 'Hermes' of the mill is turned and this strip (of papyrus) is bruised, so too turn (and bruise) the brain, the heat and all the mind of Zetous, who is also known as Kalemera—now, now, quickly quickly" (*PGM* CIX).[26] A harvest incantation with broader powers may have been integrated into the ancient Ugaritic epic of the god Baal: when his sister Anath annihilates the Death-monster Mot "She seizes Divine Mot, / With a sword she splits him, / With a sieve she winnows him./With a fire she burns him, / With millstones she grinds him./ In a field she sows him."[27] Whereas many scholars have attributed the efficacy of these kinds of *similia similibus* incantations to the "sympathetic" force of the accompanying gestures—that a ritualized performance of gesture A somehow automatically transmits action A to something or somebody somewhere else—the holistic approach exemplified in Karanika's work is preferable, whereby the totality of gesture, material, and (especially) incantation combine through the agency of the worker/speaker to exert power on an unresolved situation.[28] The efficacy of the work-song and its charms cannot be disengaged from this cumulative ritual context focused on the gesture.

And yet we do see cultural efforts to disengage contextually-specific charms for reapplication to other circumstances. A mundane act or tool of cooking, for example, might be imbued with the power to bind or curse or attract in the context of a spoken charm.[29] The two handmill-grinding incantations in the *PGM* are probably repurposed—for erotic purposes (*PGM* CIX) and theophany (*PGM* IV.3086–100)—from the domestic milieu where these acts of grinding had typically mundane functions and came to inspire ritual application. One

25 Andromache Karanika, *Voices at Work: Women, Performance, and Labor in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 144–59.

26 Christopher Faraone, "Hermes but No Marrow: Another Look at a Puzzling Magical Spell," *ZPE* 72 (1988): 279–86. Cf. *PGM* IV.3086–124.

27 KTU 1.6, col. II, ll.30–35, tr. Mark S. Smith, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 156.

28 E.g., Christopher Faraone, "Clay Hardens and Wax Melts: Magical Role-Reversal in Vergil's Eighth Eclogue," *Classical Philology* 84, no. 4 (1989): 294–300; Sandra Golopentia, "Towards a Typology of Romanian Love Charms," in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. Jonathan Roper (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 145–87; Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1954); Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," in *Culture, Thought, and Social Action*, 17–59.

29 Golopentia, "Towards a Typology of Romanian Love Charms," 176–81.

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important type of everyday domestic song that finds reapplication in other quotidian domains is the lullaby. As folklorists have observed, this genre involves specific rhythms and repetitive phrases to calm a baby as well as often plaintive narratives that allow the singer distraction and reverie. But they also are understood to function as charms of seduction and compulsion, especially (as in all charms) coming from the voices of particular individuals in a community.[30] It is probable that the rare charm for sleep in the written magical corpora derives from this lullaby context, since this situation of domestic crisis (inconsolable babies) is perennial, while chronic insomnia is seldom attested in magical or medical texts.[31] Thus two sleep spells in Coptic that sing of the trials of the god Horus, far from his mother Isis, as a *historiola*, three or four centuries after their temples had closed, must derive from lullabies, especially given their repetitive, strophic structures.[32] (Such a context in domestic folklore would also explain the persistence of Isis/Horus mythology itself in this particular form through Christian times.) The other Coptic multiforms of the charm, one for erotic binding and one for abdominal pain, are understandable reapplications of the lullaby and its *historiola* for other domains: the charm for abdominal pain stresses Horus's youth and distance from his mother and likely comes from folk knowledge of neonatal abdominal stress; the erotic spell develops a theme of longing typical of the lullaby genre.[33]

The charm's magic arises—in ancient cultures and more generally—from the seductive and compulsive powers people have attributed to particular songs and voices, whether or not accompanied by instruments or by the manipulation of particular objects. A term like *epoidē* classifies this type of

30 Theresa C. Brakely, "Lullaby," in *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, ed. Jerome Fried and Maria Leach (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Luisa Del Giudice, "Ninna-Nanna-Nonsense? Fears, Dreams, and Falling in the Italian Lullaby," *Oral Tradition* 3 (1988): 270–93; Karanika, *Voices at Work*, 160–64.

31 Among the only spells to relieve insomnia, *Suppl. Mag.* 74.1–8 and 96, A51–52 both rely on material objects inscribed, not charms proper, while a demotic Egyptian spell, *PDM* xiv.716–36, seems to have a nefarious purpose. Only two spells that I know of seek to cause insomna: *PGM* VII.374–76; XII.376–96. Cf. Raquel Martín Hernández and Sofía Torallas Tovar, "'You Who Impose Sleep Upon Abimelech for Seventy-Two Years': An Egyptian Spell Against Insomnia," in *Contesti magici*, ed. Marina Piranomonte and Francisco Marco Simón (Rome: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2012), 309–12.

32 Coptic sleep spells: *ACM* no. 47 = Berlin 5565; *ACM* no. 48 = Schmidt 1. In general see David Frankfurter, "The Laments of Horus in Coptic: Myth, Folklore, and Syncretism in Late Antique Egypt," in *Antike Mythen: Medien Transformationen und Konstruktionen*, ed. Ueli Dill and Christine Walde (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 229–47.

33 Abdominal pain: *ACM* no. 49 = Berlin 8313; Erotic binding: *ACM* no. 72 = Schmidt 2. Cf. *PDM* xiv.600–607, 1219–27.

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speech as a song directed at somebody or some situation, such that the song itself (and its singer) indicates the agency in the world. Yet it is clear from ethnographic materials that the efficacy of the charm derives as much from the context—specialist, participants, performative situation, and crisis—as from the autonomous potency of the particular charm.

3 Sacred and Liturgical Speech

Language that is associated with a priestly or Great Tradition (as in Chapter 27) carries a special efficacy, a magic, regardless of its local comprehensibility (and often due to the incomprehensibility of an authoritative tongue); and individuals who have some knowledge of that language, or the pronouncement of blessings in that language (or the ability to improvise it convincingly) gain local authority as ritual experts.[34] (One thinks of the *prêt'savanes* in Haiti, men capable in some Catholic prayers, whose ranks evolved in the eighteenth century when the official Church was expelled; thereafter, due to their quasi-mastery of Catholic sacred speech, *prêt'savanes* became essential to the performance of ceremonies in Haiti).[35] Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, like Vedic Sanskrit and other sacred languages carry an Otherness that lifts their sounds beyond semantic intelligibility but at the same time convey an authority associated with their liturgical contexts.[36] One doesn't so much listen for sense or reason as experience efficacy—to get caught up in the rhythms, the repetitions, the descriptive words that build on each other, as Gershom Scholem captured for Jewish *Hekhalot* hymns: their structures

> reveal a mechanism comparable to the motion of an enormous fly-wheel. In cyclical rhythm the hymns succeed each other, and within them the adjurations of God follow in a crescendo of glittering and majestic attributes, each stressing and reinforcing the sonorous power of the world. The monotony of their rhythm—almost all consist of verses of four

34 David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians,'" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 167–70.

35 Harold Courlander, *The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 16–17.

36 See in general Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," 17–30; Wade T. Wheelock, "Language: Sacred Language," *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), vol. 8, 439–46.

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> words—and the progressively sonorous incantations induce in those who are praying a state of mind bordering on ecstasy.[37]

In this regard, liturgical or ancestral languages are said to have a power that is lost in translation, a sentiment familiar to modern English-speaking Christians who feel the Bible is more properly intoned in King James English, but articulated even more passionately in the Hermetic document *Asclepius*, from about the third century CE. The ancient Egyptian writings, the author laments,

> will be thought more obscure in time to come, when the Greeks think fit to translate these writings from our tongue into theirs. Translation will greatly distort the sense of the writings, and cause much obscurity. Expressed in our native language, the teaching conveys the sense of the words; for the very quality of the sounds and the intonation of the Egyptian words carry in themselves the power of the things said.... Our speech is not mere talk; it is an utterance replete with workings.[38]

The lament itself is false, an effort to legitimize the texts in the Greek Hermetic corpus as genuine translations from the Egyptian. But the passage conveys the way that Greeks viewed the ritual utterances of Egyptian priests—and perhaps the way Egyptian priests themselves regarded the nature of their own ritual utterances.[39]

Along with this intrinsic power of the liturgical or sacred language there often develop new, more authoritative classes of efficacious speech, simply by virtue of association with a Great or priestly tradition. From the common indigenous category of "charm"—*epoidē* or the like—develop such "official" classes of ritual speech as "prayer" or "psalm" or "blessing," each with the presumption of proper speakers, rules for performance, and expectations for efficacy.[40] That a

37 Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1941), 59–60.

38 *Corpus Hermeticum* 16.1–2, ed. André-Jean Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1950), 2.232; trans. modified from Walter Scott, *Hermetica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 1.262–65.

39 Cf. *PGM* XII. 401–44. In general on the context of this passage see David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 248–56; Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual, 100–300 CE*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 2–10 & passim.

40 See, e.g., Matthias Klinghardt, "Prayer Formularies for Public Recitation: Their Use and Function in Ancient Religions," *Numen* 46 (1999): 1–52. Cf. David Frankfurter, "Curses, Blessings, and Ritual Authority: Egyptian Magic in Comparative Perspective," *JANER* 5, no. 1 (2005): 157–85.

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Great Tradition might introduce to a culture not only sacred speech but also authoritative genres of speech is especially evident in the Coptic materials. As Jacques van der Vliet describes in Chapter 14 (above), the forms, style, and even sanctification of ritual materials in Coptic spells directly imitate the liturgical sounds and practices from Egyptian Christian churches. This reassignment of liturgical styles certainly indicates that monks were the innovators of these texts, but even more pertinently, reflects the special efficacy that both laity and monks imputed to the liturgy.[41]

Although we properly associate this aspect of the magic of speech with liturgical traditions (Jewish, Christian, etc.) and traditions in which professional reciters maintained archaic ritual dialects apart from the broader culture, the ritual use of Homeric verses in the Roman period offers an interesting comparandum. Does this indicate a magic revered in the Homeric verse? Several brief collections of such verses used as charms appear among the Greek Magical Papyri (XXIIa; cf. IV.467–74, 2145–2240). In many cases the instructions are to *write* the verse on some material, suggesting that this tradition of magical Homer verses came about in the Roman period through the textualization of the Homeric corpus.[42] But instructions also mention "speaking [*legomenos*]" the verses in one case (to blood, XXIIa.4) and "uttering [*epilegetō*]" while sprinkling sea-water in another (IV.2157–58); and a Coptic codex from the fifth century CE, includes a Homeric verse in its predominantly oral compilation of charms and remedies, suggesting that the essential orality of the Homeric verses may have continued in charm form.[43] Thus it may

41 See also Angelicus Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 3 (Bruxelles: Édition de la fondation égyptologique reine Élisabeth, 1931); Jacques van der Vliet, "Literature, Liturgy, Magic: A Dynamic Continuum," in *Christianity in Egypt: Literary Production and Intellectual Trends in Late Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi*, ed. Paula Buzi and Alberto Camplani (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011), 555–74; Theodore de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), chap. 6; David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), chap. 6.

42 Christopher Faraone, "Taking the 'Nestor's Cup Inscription' Seriously: Erotic Magic and Conditional Curses in the Earliest Inscribed Hexameters," *Classical Antiquity* 15, no. 1 (1996): 83–86. Cf. on another ritual use of Homeric verses, Andromache Karanika, "Homer the Prophet: Homeric Verses and Divination in the Homeromanteion," in *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy, and Religion*, ed. A.P.M.H. Lardinois, J.H. Blok, and M.G.M. van der Poel, Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World 8 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 255–77.

43 *ACM* no. 43 = Michigan 137, p.4, in William H. Worrell, "Coptic Magical and Medical Texts," *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 1–37; 184–94, tr. *ACM*, 84.

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be that Homeric language itself constituted an authoritative tongue for ritual utterances.[44]

Finally, it is worth considering the phenomenon of metrically-composed hymns to gods scattered among the Greek Magical Papyri and recently edited by Bortolani—for example, this one to Helios:[45]

> Daphne-Laurel, sacred plant of Apollo's divination,
> Whose leaves the sceptre-bearing lord himself once tasted and revealed chants,
> Ieios, renowned Paian,
> Who dwell in Colophon, give ear to the sacred chant.
> Come quickly from the sky to the earth being in my company;
> And stop, and inspire chants from the immortal lips,
> You yourself, lord of song, come, renowned lord of song.
> …
> O Phoibos, tell the song through (your) immortal mouth;
> Hail, lord of fire, ARARACHCHARA ĒPHTHISIKĒRE
> …
> I call you, mighty in the sky,
> Air-like, with free will
> To whom all nature submitted,
> Who dwell in the whole inhabited world.[46]

Standing out from other spells for their use of Greek forms of divine acclamation, these hymns suggest at least that the compilers of the papyrus collections were incorporating a different type of ritual speech, one drawing not on *voces magicae*, declarations, and commands, but rather one that recalled Greek temple ceremonies and that we might compare to liturgical speech. The language of invocation revolves around the sound of incantation (*aoidē*) and song (*molpē*). That is, the particular, metrical verbal forms of these kinds of divine acclamation carry an efficacy different from other types of speech; and, incorporated into a ritual for divination, theophany, or binding, such acclamations could also convey authority and efficacy—in a different tradition of speech from those in the Egyptian tradition.

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44 The complex IV/V BCE apotropaic charm in epic-like meter preserved in the Getty Hexameters is meant to be inscribed on tin and hidden in the house (ll. 2–3; see Caliva, "Speech Acts").

45 Ljuba Merlina Bortolani, *Magical Hymns from Roman Egypt: A Study of Greek and Egyptian Traditions of Divinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

46 *PGM* II.81–102, ed./tr. Bortolani, *Magical Hymns*, 176–78.

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In general, we should be attentive to the popular—"lived"—implications of any liturgical tradition, as such codified types of verbal performance introduced whole new dimensions of magical speech, capable of blessing, cursing, healing, and invoking holy beings with an air of institutional authority.

4 Otherworldly Speech

In his groundbreaking analysis of Trobriand ritual speech Bronislaw Malinowski introduced the two verbal components, the coefficient of intelligibility and the coefficient of weirdness, which together (and in dialectic) create authority and power. The coefficient of weirdness embraces a range of nonsense words, but introduced in the context of the charm they signify that magic and its traditions come from outside mundane social reality, from the primeval world of ancestors and culture heroes.[47]

Students of the Greek Magical Papyri and other written corpora will be familiar with the long strings of *voces magicae* that, we may presume to some extent, reflected verbal practices consistent with Malinowski's coefficient of weirdness, although some forms are discussed also in Chapter 23, below, as inscribed phenomena.[48] But these Greco-Egyptian documents go even further in demarcating an area of speech that is meaningful in an otherworldly sense even if incoherent semantically—that has *parole* beyond *langue* (in the words of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure): "I call [you, Helios,] in every language and in every dialect," reads one spell, following a series of declarations that the ritualist invokes Helios "in birdglyphic: ARAI;... in Hebraic: ANOCH BIATHIARBATH BERBIR ECHILATOUR BOUPHROUMTROM; in Egyptian: ALDABEIM; in baboonic: ABRASAX; in falconic: CHI CHI CHI CHI CHI CHI CHI TIPH TIPH TIPH;..."[49] Some of these invented ritual languages emphasize a correspondence to a writing system (*-glyphisti*), but in other texts one is instructed to utter the sounds of a baboon as distinctly

47 Bronislaw Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* (New York: Dover, 1978), vol. 2, 213–31.

48 Cf. H.S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay on the Power of Words," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 105–58; Michel Tardieu, "'Ceux qui font la voix des oiseaux': Les dénominations de langues," in *Noms barbares I: Formes et contextes d'une pratique magique*, ed. Michel Tardieu, Anna Van den Kerchove, and Michela Zago, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses 162 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 143–53; Nicolas Corre, "Noms barbares et 'barbarisation' dans les formules efficaces latines.," in *Noms barbares I*, 93–108; Sabina Crippa, "Les savoirs des voix magiques. Réflexion sur la catégorie du rite," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*, 239–50.

49 *PGM* XIII.80–85, 139–40, tr. *GMPT* 175, 174; cf. *PGM* XIII. 455–71.

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holy—perhaps through this animal's relationship to the Egyptian god Thoth (*PGM* IV.1003–7; V.27–25).

In an important essay on these vocalic devices, which extended to more systematic writers of the Roman period,[50] Sabina Crippa has proposed that the authors were engaged in broader speculations—in a ritual mode—on the phonic nature of language, from the Greek vowels to the sounds of animals, of foreigners, and even the representation of voice in inscribed materials like gems.[51] A complementary approach to these phenomena appears in Patricia Cox Miller's renowned essay "In Praise of Nonsense," which explored new trends in theological speculation in Greco-Roman antiquity that advocated—in the quest of invoking heavenly beings—the near-obliteration of semantic meaning in order to break through to the celestial world. Foreign, animal, or geometrically-configured names or sounds were all devices in this effort to transcend language itself—to move beyond a cultural or linguistic otherness to a divine sphere of sounds.[52] Is the following text supposed to be actual glossolalia or the subject's attainment of pure spiritual sounds?

> O Iesseus! [..] ôêoôuua! In very truth! O Isseus-Mazareus-Iessedekeus! O living water! O child of the child! O name of all glories in very truth! O eternal being! IIII HHHH EEEE OOOO YYYY ΩΩΩΩ AAAA! In very truth! HI AAAA ΩΩΩΩ! O being, which beholds the aeons in very truth! A EE HHH IIII YYYYY ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ! O existent for ever and ever in very truth! IHA AIΩ in the heart! O existent upsilon forever unto eternity! You are what you are! You are what you are! … For what being can comprehend you by speech or praise?[53]

This latter text, from a ritual (baptismal) *libretto* included in two of the Nag Hammadi codices, shows precisely the systematization of these ideas of the transcendence of language in an early Christian liturgical form. In this way

50 Cf. Iamblichus, *De myst*. 6.6; 7.

51 Crippa, "Les savoirs des voix magiques," 239–50. Cf. Tardieu, "'Ceux qui font la voix des oiseaux'" in *Noms Barbares I*, 143–53; Corre, "Noms barbares et 'barbarisation'," in *Noms Barbares I*, 93–108.

52 Patricia Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A.H. Armstrong, World Spirituality; 15 (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 481–505; cf. Naomi Janowitz, "Parallelism and Framing Devices in a Late Antique Ascent Text," in *Semiotic Mediation* (San Diego: Elsevier Inc., 1985), 165–66.

53 *Gospel of the Egyptians* (*NHC III*, 66.8–22/IV, 78.10–79.11), synoptically translated by Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 118; Alexander Böhlig, Frederik Wisse, and Pahor Labib, *Nag Hammadi Codices III, 2 and IV, 2: The Gospel of the Egyptians*, Nag Hammadi Studies 4 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 198–202.

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the phonetic alphabet of the Greeks, with its dynamic reflection of orality through the denotation of vowels and consonants, comes paradoxically to the point of nullifying itself. That is, the very vowels that make the alphabet functional become the symbolic and vocalic means to *transcend* language in its regular phonetic order. Such a "radical orality" that transcends speech through the use of its own alphabet is also manifest in the visual representations of vowels on amulets and their corresponding manuals: sound and image perpetually reflect each other.[54]

In some ways all these expressions of otherworldly speech can be covered under Malinowski's category of the coefficient of weirdness. But Crippa, Miller, and others have shown that at least some intellectual subcultures in late antiquity concerned with the nature of ritual speech developed more systematic (or mystical) ideologies of "nonsense language" and its relationship to everyday speech, to inscribed letters and characters, and to the sounds of fauna and of the cosmos at large. Still, it is important not to over-read the expressions of otherworldly speech or weirdness in every individual artifact, as their functions may simply be to empower utterances.

5 Conclusion

The various magical aspects of speech discussed in this chapter do not negate or contradict each other but mutually contribute to an overall principle, that speech does much more than transmit information, intentions, commands, and the like. Various types of speech carry *illocutionary* force, transforming social or ceremonial situations, and this force is presumed in the *charm*, a reification of cross-cultural beliefs in the efficacy of certain songs, tunes, and voices. The force of the charm is generalized to the *liturgical or official* prayer or hymn, whose potency now shifts to the divine sources of those prayers or hymns (for example, the general magical efficacy of the *trisagion* or *kedushah* hymn, which was supposedly first uttered by seraphim [Isa 6.3] but then formed a centerpoint of many early Jewish and Christian liturgies).[55] The magic thus shifts from the compelling tunes and verses of the charm (and the charisma of the charmer) to authoritative words conveyed in a sacred language—and quite

54 On visual representations see below, Frankfurter, Chapter 23. On mystical extensions of these ideas see Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," 481–505; Janowitz, "Parallelism and Framing Devices in a Late Antique Ascent Text," 165–66, and Maria Gorea, "Des noms imprononçables," in *Noms barbares I*, 109–20. See below, Janowitz, Chapter 25.

55 Theodore de Bruyn, "The Use of the Sanctus in Christian Greek Papyrus Amulets," *Studia Patristica* 40 (2006): 15–19.

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possibly also inscribed—as part of the Great Tradition. Yet an alternative way for speech to carry this supra-mundane credibility or otherworldly potency is through verbal or phonic indicators that meaning itself is being conveyed in another zone—implicitly the phonetic zone of the gods. The alternation between semantic and trans-semantic speech, coefficients of intelligibility and of weirdness, allow participants and clients to experience the combination of directed imprecation and otherworldly authority simultaneously.

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CHAPTER 23

The Magic of Writing in Mediterranean Antiquity

David Frankfurter

1 Introduction[1]

Ethnographers of non- or minimally literate cultures have long noted that, in these cultures' encounters with writing, they conceptualize letters and textuality not primarily as a communicative or recording technology for representing speech or ideas but as a set of symbols indexing divinity, spirits, heritage, colonial power, or charismatic authority.[2] Why is this? Because writing and text are, *prima facie*, material and iconic symbols—things and pictures—rather than sounds and sentences as the literate have learned to perceive them, and their cultural significance thus comes down to their material and iconic power: e.g., the authority they bear, what beings lie behind them, how one shows, manipulates, or contains their power.[3] Of course, this understanding of letter and book is all the more dominant when these media are supposed to represent a religious "Great Tradition" like Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism, or an imperial system like the Ottoman or British empires. In such cases there is an ideology, sustained by performative traditions (like liturgy or preaching), that makes special claims on the material, even numinous value of the text, its contents, and the writing therein.[4]

Thus in many parts of Muslim Africa local scribes write out particular suras of the Qur'an on wooden boards, to be washed off into healing and protective

1 This chapter represents a revision and updating of David Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic: The Power of the Word in Egyptian and Greek Traditions," *Helios* 21, no. 2 (1994): 189–221. I am grateful to Texas Tech University Press for allowing its republication and to Jacco Dieleman for advice on the revision.

2 See esp. Jack Goody, "Introduction," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 15–19; Jack Goody, "Restricted Literacy in Northern Ghana," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, 201–37; Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, 27–68.

3 Dorina Miller Parmenter, "The Iconic Book: The Image of the Bible in Early Christian Rituals," in *Iconic Books and Texts*, ed. James W. Watts (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013), 63–92; Michelle P. Brown, "Images to Be Read and Words to Be Seen: The Iconic Role of the Early Medieval Book," in *Iconic Books and Texts*, ed. James W. Watts (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013), 93–118.

4 See, e.g., James Robson, "Signs of Power: Talismanic Writing in Chinese Buddhism," *History of Religions* 48, no. 2 (2008): 130–69.

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potions; and many millennialist movements among Melanesian and native American peoples involved a "Bible" as an accoutrement of authority.[5] The anthropologist Douglas Johnson recalls, during one of his first visits to the Sudan, how a Nuer elder "showed me one of his most valued possessions: a battered copy of Evans-Pritchard's [1956] *Nuer Religion*" that he could not read but had long revered, for it contained "'the history of our people which has never been written'."[6] The classic ethnographic work indicated not only British colonial sanction bestowed on the Nuer but the textualization of an essential past. It is thus not only writing that carries a captivating potency—for its iconicity, the scribal artistry involved in its shapes, its capability to replicate lore—but all the containers, bindings, gestures, and manifestations of writing as well: the book, the page, the performance of "reading," and the ways all this textual culture might play out in dreams and otherworldly visions.

It is these features of the written word that have long justified a concept of a "magic" in writing, an ambiguity in the *letter* between image and semantic sign, and an ambiguity in the *material inscribed*, between vehicle of communication and vehicle impregnated with the power of the written (or spoken) word. The writing of a name becomes an index of that name and the person or god that bears it; a lintel inscribed with a biblical passage now radiates the protective potency of that passage; a prayer or invocation inscribed on some substance maintains its utterance, its performative efficacy, long after the moment of vocalization and even in the absence of vocal support.[7]

Materials from the ancient world, however, show additional dimensions to this magic. First of all, the magic of the written word inevitably reflects the exotic character of the letters—whether the foreign or cryptic appearance of some alphabet or the weird use of familiar letters. Secondly, this exoticism was intrinsically related (at least in the perspective of Greeks and Romans) to cultures associated with efficacious writing systems, alphabets that carry divine power, like the Hebrew maintained in Judaism and, even more, the hieroglyphic writing of ancient Egypt. Indeed, it is one of the contentions of this

5 See, e.g., Abdullahi Osman El-Tom, "Drinking the Koran: The Meaning of Koranic Verses in Berti Erasure," *Africa* 55 (1985): 414–31.

6 Douglas Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), vii; Martha Kaplan, "The Magical Power of the (Printed) Word," in *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, ed. Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 183–99.

7 Maria Gorea, "Des noms imprononçables," in *Noms barbares I: Formes et contextes d'une pratique magique*, ed. Michel Tardieu, Anna Van den Kerchove, and Michela Zago, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes-Études, Sciences Religieuses 162 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 114. On the materials that bear inscriptions see above, Wilburn, Chapter 20.

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essay that the concept of the hieroglyph itself gave rise to a number of graphic innovations in the inscribing of amulets and other types of efficacious text in antiquity. In certain cultural contexts, Greek letters came to acquire an essential visuality and materiality, whose manipulation required a ritual specialist's charismatic craft. The ritual expertise involved in thus inscribing amulets, binding charms, and anything else reflected, not just Greek ideas of writing, but a broader Mediterranean notion of magical scribality that was ultimately rooted in the sacred scribality of Egyptian, Jewish, and other cultures. Writing became not simply a pragmatic technology but a ritual craft: the capability to invest media—stone, wood, papyrus—with potent names and to bind people by means of the material forms of their personal names. It is in this sense, perhaps, that Jesus himself is imagined, in the Gospel of John, as "writing with his finger on the ground" unknown letters of unknown purpose (8:6b). The scene highlights through omission the power of the craft itself (especially considering the fraught context in which he performs writing here).[8]

By craft I mean the specialist's (or general scribe's) sense of inscribing materials for some ritual purpose as a deliberate process of creating efficacy. Names of victims are "registered [*katagraphein*]," not just written; invocations and binding commands are embedded among *charaktēres* and *voces magicae*; the coldness, lead-ness, or other material character of the writing medium is drawn into the spell, all serving to centralize the process of inscription as the key event in the production of efficacy. Richard Gordon has described various types of *pseudo-paragraphia*, in which scribes deliberately altered the direction or style of writing: reversing a name so as to bind that person's fate, or reversing the lines of a spell, not to encrypt it but to render the words more efficacious through their anti-semantic arrangement.[9] Writing is not simply the recording of oral charms but a ritual act in itself that encompasses a material medium as well as a performative situation and extends it in time.[10]

In some ways this attribution of potency to the very act of writing follows from the social or legal potency of some of the genres that scribes developed and used. To "inscribe" a name is to fix it permanently in a document and make it subject to a contract. Numerous curses in Greek and Egyptian draw on legal phraseology and formulas, not simply to convince gods through legal

8 Cf. Jennifer Wright Knust and Tommy Wasserman, "Earth Accuses Earth: Tracing What Jesus Wrote on the Ground," *HTR* 103, no. 4 (2010): 407–46.

9 Richard Gordon, "Showing the Gods the Way: Curse-Tablets as Deictic Persuasion," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1, no. 2 (2015): 165–73.

10 See esp. Fritz Graf, "Magie et écriture: Quelques réflexions," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*, ed. Magali de Haro Sanchez (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2015), 227–38.

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argument but out of a cultural sense that legal formulations "work" on gods, people, and situations.[11] This scribal appeal to legal genres emerges even more strikingly in early Jewish exorcistic formulas, often those inscribed in bowls for domestic protection, that use formal divorce language (the *get*) to separate a demon from a home.[12]

Scribal expertise lies in adjusting these lofty legal formulations for people's everyday struggles with gods, demons, and neighbors. This reassignment of legal genres to exorcisms and curses imagines a potency in their flexible application that goes beyond the social/performative contexts in which they were developed. So also with the genre of the letter, which assumed a kind of magical value in the applications of the scribal tradition of Jesus's apocryphal letter to King Abgar. While this correspondence itself floated around the Mediterranean world as a valued text, many papyri show scribes' creative efforts to adjust the idea of a letter from Jesus to the particular names and situations of clients—that is, as amulets.[13]

These are some of the ways we see a magic in the written word in antiquity: a magic that revolves around the ideas of graphically representing speech, of graphic permanence, of binding genres and contracts, and of the letter or alphabetic system itself. How amulets, inscriptions, curses, and the rest made use of these ideas in antiquity drew on archaic notions of the written word that arose in both Egypt and Greece (and to some extent Israelite and Babylonian

11 See in general John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 116–24; H.S. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60–106; H.S. Versnel, "Writing Mortals and Reading Gods: Appeal to the Gods as a Dual Strategy in Social Control," in *Demokratie, Recht und soziale Kontrolle im klassischen Athens*, ed. David Cohen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002), 37–76; Tonio Sebastian Richter, "Markedness and Unmarkedness in Coptic Magical Writing," in *Écrire la magie*, 91–94.

12 See esp. Shaul Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells: Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Approaches*, ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karol Van der Toorn (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 173–95; Dan Levene and Gideon Bohak, "Divorcing Lilith: From the Babylonian Incantation Bowls to the Cairo Genizah," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 63, no. 2 (2012): 197–217.

13 Circulation of apocryphon: e.g., *Itinerarium Egeriae*, 19. Personalized examples: P. Oxy 65.4469; Vienna K8302 = *ACM* no. 61. See esp. Kevin P. Sullivan and Terry G. Wilfong, "The Reply of Jesus to King Abgar: A Coptic New Testament Apocryphon Reconsidered (P.Mich. Inv. 6213)," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists.* 42, no. 1–4 (2005): 107–24; Andrew Mark Henry, "Apotropaic Autographs: Orality and Materiality in the Abgar-Jesus Inscriptions," *ARG* 17 (2016): 165–86; J. Gregory Given, "Utility and Variance in Late Antique Witnesses to the Abgar-Jesus Correspondence," *ARG* 17 (2016): 187–222.

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traditions). This essay will thus proceed in a way that considers both Egyptian and Greek legacies as they intertwined in the magical graphic traditions of the Greco-Roman and late antique worlds. From a general perspective on the notion of the hieroglyph and the magical power of words in Egypt (Part 2), I shift to the more "oral" concepts of writing in the Greek tradition and their extension to ritual elaborations of speech, like the chanting of the seven vowels (Part 3). I then turn to the various inventions of the Greek letters as iconic symbols, not simply graphemes for sounds (Part 4), and finally to the image of the *charaktēr*, the "ring-signs" and doodles omnipresent across Greek, Coptic, Jewish, and Latin amulets that seem to represent a transcendent writing system but, in fact, were developed idiosyncratically across the ancient world as a non-semantic hieroglyphic system for ritual purposes.

2 Egypt and the Nature of the Hieroglyph

Egypt has always provided rich examples of divinely potent writing—writing that carried power by virtue of the letters themselves. The pictographic nature of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing made it quite distinct from the Greek alphabet of phonetic characters. On seeing hieroglyphic texts on walls or papyrus one is immediately struck by the visual continuity between pictographic writing and iconographic illustrations. Not only are actual characters shared, but quite often hieroglyphs themselves carried ideographic or logographic meaning: the character signified the word, or an entire idea or cosmic force. While phonetic writing with hieroglyphs had developed from these ideographic signs, the characters themselves remained pictographic: animals, people, and objects.[14] Moreover, in ritual texts the individual characters continued to carry the kind of concrete power imputed to iconographic symbols. For example, the human and animal characters in mortuary prayers often appear "neutralized"—meticulously mutilated or replaced—when inscribed in certain parts of tombs, in order that these characters not come alive and impede a successful afterlife.[15] The vocalization of words was symbolically fixed to their written expression (and vice versa), so writing could substitute for vocal utterance, as in the healing and mortuary spells which are meant to "work" merely through their inscribed presence on stelae and tomb walls. Writing with pictographs allowed a degree of scribal self-consciousness unattainable with the simple

14 See Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. (London: Clarendon Press, 1957), esp. 6–10; cf. §§ 56, 73 on the importance of ideograms and graphic organization.

15 Pierre Lacau, "Suppression et modifications de signes dans les textes funéraires," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache* 51 (1913): 1–64.

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phonetic signs of an alphabet, for the scribe was writing the words of the god or pharaoh. The written word itself was a sacred object.[16]

Egyptian letters were the chief technology of a hierocratic scribal elite who preserved and enacted rituals—and by extension the cosmic order itself—through the written word. Writing in Egypt was maintained by and for a priesthood with the intention of encoding or *fixing* ritual and cosmology in a timeless and ideal reality. Rituals proceeded according to texts which themselves could only be read and interpreted by priests.[17]

Hieroglyphic writing also in its cursive derivative (i.e., hieratic) represented cultic speech and activities; its language was discontinuous with popularly spoken Egyptian. Writing itself was intertwined with the preservation and efficacy of the cult. Thus the writing system itself served to circumscribe and bind hieroglyphs with cult. Within the cultic-priestly sphere hieroglyphic writing was conceived as rendering precision in pronunciation during liturgical performance and lending systematization to the cosmos and pantheon. Temples were not silent places. Hieroglyphic writing conveyed ritual *speech*, recording and organizing the prayers and incantation, the *vocal* expressions of power. Even innovations in spoken liturgy, once written, instantly achieved an archaistic timelessness, as if it had always been so. Consequently, in Egyptian ritual there was an ancient correspondence between the precisely vocalized "word of power" and its hieroglyphic representation. Egyptian ritual represented a manipulation of words that alternated subtly between both forms.[18]

These dual modes might indeed get paradoxical. The companion of the god Heka—"magic," the power in the cosmos drawn upon in priestly ritual—is described in an Edfu inscription as "possessor of spells, bearing her writings which are in her mouth."[19] That is, Egyptian spells draw together the written and the vocalized into one multivalent concept, the "word of power."

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16 Serge Sauneron, *The Priests of Ancient Egypt*, trans. Ann Morrissett (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 118–25; John Baines, "Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society," *Man* 18, no. 3 (1983): 572–99; W.V. Davies, *Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 14–19; Erik Hornung, *Idea into Image: Essays on Ancient Egyptian Thought*, trans. Elizabeth Bredeck (New York: Timken, 1992), 31–36; Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, 313–19; Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 26–44.

17 See Goody and Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," 13–22; Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*, 26–35; Baines, "Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society," 572–99. See also Joachim Friedrich Quack, "La magie au temple," in *La magie en Égypte: À la recherche d'une définition* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2002), 41–68.

18 Baines, "Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society," 579.

19 Trans. Robert K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1993), 36. On *heka* see above, Dieleman, Chap. 6.

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But for a culture in which literacy was largely the provenance of the priesthood, how was the "power" of spells meant to be accessible to an illiterate populace? We may distinguish three routes of such accessibility: the *vicarious*, in which people observe or trust in the proper performance of rites by sections of the priesthood; the *direct ritual*, in which a client submits to healing or other rites (gestures and incantations) for his or her immediate or imminent benefit, and is subsequently presented with an amulet prepared in the context of priestly ritual; and the *concretely efficacious*, in which people "tap" the letters or words of inscribed spells by pouring water over them. Whether the spell was enacted, uttered, or simply "washed off," so Egyptologists have recognized, the power of the spells inhered in the very names and letters, the very *hieroi glyphoi*.[20]

The magical function of the very symbols of writing is immediately apparent to anyone visiting a collection of Egyptian antiquities, where scarabs, stylized eyes (the "Eye of Horus"), and other stereotyped images occasionally associated with particular gods, carved in some semiprecious stone, constitute the *typical* amulet in Egyptian culture for living and dead alike. But these same images were used in hieroglyphic writing, too.[21] A semiotic continuity between graphic symbol and efficacious icon exerted a strong influence on the conception of the hieroglyph, for the very hieroglyphic symbols which carried semantic or logographic meaning in the context of writing systems also functioned as material amulets—protective devices.

But to investigate the "literary" nature of magical power it is helpful to examine instances in which more complete texts are employed as amulets. In the centuries preceding Egypt's Hellenization (third century BCE) one such text was the *oracle* ritually produced and inscribed for an individual. So-called "amuletic decrees" from the Third Intermediate Period (tenth to eighth centuries BCE) describe all the conceivable dangers and demonic forces in (and after) life, against which a certain god would protect the owner:

20 Baines, "Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society," 588–89; See also George Foucart, "Names (Egyptian)," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Scribner, 1917), 151–55; W. Dawson, "Notes on Egyptian Magic," *Aegyptus* 11, no. 1 (1931): 28; Serge Sauneron, "Le monde du magicien égyptien," in *Le monde du sorcier*, Sources orientales 7 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 32–34, 48–49, cf. 42–43 on amulets corresponding to rituals.

21 See esp. Budge, *Egyptian Magic*; Davies, *Egyptian Hieroglyphs*, 20; John H. Taylor, "129. Set of Amulets," in *Mummies & Magic: The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Sue D'Auria and Peter Lacovara (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1988), 180–83; David P. Silverman, *Language and Writing in Ancient Egypt*, Carnegie Series on Egypt (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 1990), 37–44; and Yvan Koenig, *Magie et magiciens dans l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris: Pygmalion, 1994), 79–82.

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> Said Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep, the great god, the oldest who was the first to come into existence: I shall protect [the named client].... I shall make his dreams good; I shall make those dreams which another man or another woman shall see for him good.... I shall protect him from the demons and from the gremlins. I shall protect him from any [demonic beings] who seize a man through capture. I shall protect him from those who size someone stealthily.... I shall save him from a crocodile, a serpent, a scorpion, and from any mouth which bites. I shall protect him from the gods and goddesses of the (book) 'That-which-is-in-the-year.'" ... I shall cause that this oracle protect (him) and likewise the oracle which I shall place in the presence (daily).[22]

Such texts were presumably uttered in some temple ritual, following which the papyrus copy was rolled into a small wooden tube and delivered to the client for apotropaic purposes throughout her or his everyday life. Thus the amuletic decree reflects the "orality" of the ritual. Furthermore, its genre derives from the contract—in this case, a contract by the particular temple god to guard the client against all the named dangers. However, the repetitive structure, emphasizing the names or characters of each individual "danger" in life, bespeaks the unique Egyptian conception that through *naming* in a ritual context—especially a cursing or apotropaic context—one gains power over the named. That is, the amuletic decree functions by virtue of the fact that it bears the actual names of all the dangers.[23]

In contrast, an ancient Greek amulet manufactured likewise for protection would have derived its power from the appeal or invocation itself, uttered initially and perhaps inscribed on the amulet: e.g., the "leaf" (*phyllon*) that, according to Socrates in Plato's *Charmides*, would cure headaches only if applied while uttering a spoken formula (*epôidê*). "Without the spoken formula the leaf had no power," says Socrates (155E); while in Egypt the written amulet could operate independently *as* the spoken utterance of a god.

An important example of how the power in Egyptian ritual texts might be conveyed through the very inscription of words appears in the so-called

22 P. Cleveland 14.723, in Briant Bohleke, "An Oracular Amuletic Decree of Khonsu in the Cleveland Museum of Art," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 83 (1997): 155–67. Cf. I.E.S. Edwards, trans., *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Fourth Series: Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late Kingdom*, vol. 1 (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1960), 3–6.

23 See Edwards, *Oracular Amuletic Decrees*, vol. 1, xviii–xxiii.

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cippi of Horus and associated healing statues.[24] *Cippi* were stelae bearing the image of the child Horus, standing on crocodiles and holding an assortment of reptiles and animals in his hands, often surrounded by other "savior" gods in various scenes. In the more elaborate *cippi*, inscribed mythological narratives of Horus and Isis relevant to the healing of venoms would cover the rest of the stele, including its back, sides, and even the base upon which the stele would be customarily erected.[25] Most importantly, dug out of the *cippus*' stone base was often a small depression for a pool, meant to collect water poured over the *cippus* itself.

These *cippi* of Horus demonstrate that, in Egyptian ritual and medical tradition, the power inherent in the image of Horus triumphing over reptiles, the images of other salvific deities, and the mythological narratives themselves inscribed in hieroglyphs could be "washed off" and transferred to water for ingestion or amuletic protection against the bites and stings of certain Egyptian fauna. In one sense this phenomenon reflects the importance of materiality as a medium of agencies, even a kind of contagion in the distribution of agency.[26]

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24 See Pierre Lacau, "Les statues 'guérisseuses' dans l'ancienne Égypte," *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Paris. Commission de la Fondation Piot. Monuments et mémoires* 25 (1921): 189–209; Keith C. Seele, "Horus on the Crocodiles," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6, no. 1 (1947): 43–52; Adolf Klasens, *Magical Statue Base* (*Socle Behague*) *in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden.* (Leiden, 1952); E. Jelínková-Reymond, *Les Inscriptions de la statue guérisseuse de Djed-Her-Le-Sauveur*, Bibliothèque d'étude 23 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1956); Jean Claude Goyon, "L'eau dans la médecine pharaonique et copte," in *L'homme et l'eau en méditerranée et au proche orient*, vol. 1, Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient (Lyon: GIS Maison de l'Orient, 1981), 147–50; Claude Traunecker, "Une chapelle de magie guérisseuse sur le parvis du temple de Mout à Karnak," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 20 (1982): 65–92; Robert K. Ritner, "Horus on the Crocodiles: A Juncture of Religion and Magic in Late Dynastic Egypt," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. W.K. Simpson, Yale Egyptological Studies 3 (New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1989), 109–11; Heike Sternberg-El Hotabi, *Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Horusstelen*, 2 vols., Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 62 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999); Annie Gasse, *Les stèles d'Horus sur les crocodiles* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004). On temple context see Quack, "La magie au temple," 54–57.

25 See translations and discussions by A. Moret, "Horus Sauveur," *Revue de L'histoire des religions* 72 (1915): 213–87; Klasens, *Magical Statue Base*; Jelínková-Reymond, *Les inscriptions de la statue guérisseuse de Djed-Her-le-Sauveur*, 1–84; J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, Nisaba 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 59–76 (nos. 87, 90–05, 101, 104).

26 See below, Frankfurter, Chapter 24. Compare the juridical "poison ordeal" in Numbers 5:21–28, in which an adulterous woman must drink water passed over a written curse, and, further, Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), 122–24; Dierk Wortmann, "Neue Magische Texte," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 168 (1968): 102–3.

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Yet the fact that it is the *images of words* that are transferred contagiously in this case expresses the Egyptian concept of the *physical* hieroglyph, word, or name as a concrete medium for the "power" of the word, name, god, or myth that is signified. In the story of Setne-Khamwas (extant in demotic Egyptian from the Ptolemaic period), a scribe demonstrates the same assumptions in his way of memorizing a book: he copies it onto new papyrus, soaks the copy in beer, and "when he knew it had dissolved, he drank it and knew what had been in it."[27] Insofar as the spells inscribed on the *cippi* correspond to spells recorded in ritual papyri (for example, *P. Turin* 1993), it is probable that they were also uttered aloud in healing rituals by priests, who could read the spells. The *cippi*, therefore, ensconced in healing shrines connected with major temples, made the power of the spells available on an ongoing basis to the non-literate "folk" as well as priests.

3 Greek Writing, Ritual Orality, and the *voces magicae*

In contrast to these traditions of divine literacy in Egypt, the classicist Marcel Détienne has argued, ancient Greek culture had a more oral understanding of writing, extending even to an ideology of suspicion towards the written word. As we have seen, for the priestly scribal literate traditions in Egypt (and Babylonia as well), textuality carried mythical importance and sacred efficacy due to its association with temple activity. Greek writing, in contrast, was a pragmatic, even democratic technology that served communication and record-keeping. In myth and legend, Détienne argued, Greek writing represented a cultural decline, from socially enacted memory to a state of dependence on written notes. Thus writing (as Plato himself put it) could lead to laziness or, even deception.[28] If somewhat overstated, Détienne's broad characterization of Greek writing as something that did not lend itself to intrinsic holiness is

27 Setne I, 4.4, trans. Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 3 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 131.

28 Plato, *Phaedrus* 274–75, with Marcel Detienne, "L'écriture inventive (entre la voix d'Orphée et l'intelligence de Palamède)," *Critique* 475 (1986): 1225–34; Marcel Detienne, *The Writing of Orpheus: Greek Myth in Cultural Context*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). On Greek cultural ambivalence towards written records see Eric Alfred Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Goody and Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," 49–52; Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); and William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 72–73. The first-century CE Jewish text *Similitudes of Enoch* reflects a similar ambivalence towards writing (69.9–10).

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borne out in the case of ritual writings: cult books and records, mystery teachings, oracle collections, and so on. Such books, Albert Henrichs showed, always had a fundamentally oral function, even when they were revered as sacred or secret. That is, they did not function purely through the presence of the written word (as with Egyptian texts).[29]

On the other hand, there was the sense in ancient Greek culture that, in their capacity as phonetic markers, Greek letters could convey preternatural agency: the music of voices (like Orpheus's) or of cosmic bodies.[30] Greek writing's mysterious power to symbolize sounds alone was epitomized in the seven vowels—alphabetic devices largely lacking in Egyptian and Semitic languages—and the numinous elaborations they assumed in amulets and ritual texts during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

I will shortly address the development of traditions around the iconicity of Greek letters. Here, however, I want to follow the essential aural potency of Greek vowels into their incorporation as *voces magicae* in Greco-Egyptian ritual manuals. This broad subcategory of incantations that modern philologists have found largely untranslatable includes everything from names and epithets of deities from around the ancient Mediterranean world, to equally traditional forms of assonance and alliteration, creative wordplay (such as one finds in children's word-games), and, presumably, actual ecstatic glossolalia.[31]

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29 Albert Henrichs, "'Hieroi Logoi' and 'Hierai Bibloi': The (Un)Written Margins of the Sacred in Ancient Greece," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 101 (2003): 207–66.

30 Detienne, "L'écriture inventive," 1232–34; Franz von Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, Stoicheia 7 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1925), 11–17; Christian Billigmeier, "Alphabets," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 216–22; Detienne, *Writing of Orpheus*. Fritz Graf argues for a more fundamental technology of writing in Greek ritual culture: "Magie et écriture: Quelques réflexions," 227–38.

31 In general see the collection of Karl Wessely, *Ephesia Grammata: Aus Papyrusrollen, Inschriften, Gemmen Etc.* (Vienna: A. Pichlers Witwe & Sohn, 1886). For various discussions of the origin of *voces magicae*, see Chester C. McCown, "The Ephesia Grammata in Popular Belief," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 4 (1923): 128–40; Hans Alexander Winkler, "Die Aleph-Beth-Regel: Eine Beobachtung an sinnlosen Wörten in Kinderversen, Zaubersprüchen und Verwandtem," in *Orientalistische Studien Enno Littmann*, ed. R. Paret (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1935), 1–24; Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets: Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1950); L.H. Jeffrey, "Further Comments on Archaic Greek Inscriptions," *Annual of the British School of Athens* 50 (1955): 69–76; Gershom G. Scholem, "On the Magical Formulae AKRAMACHAREI and SESENGEN BARPHARANGES," in *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965), 94–100; Howard M. Jackson, "The Origin in Ancient Incantatory *Voces Magicae* of Some Names in the Sethian Gnostic System," *VC* 43 (1989): 69–79; Fritz Graf, "Prayer in Magical and Religious Ritual," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press,

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In Graeco-Egyptian spells, long strings of vowels are often found woven among the more "consonantal" *voces magicae* with no apparent difference in sense (or non-sense):

> Add also the following [spell], which is to be written on laurel leaves, and … placed beside your head, rolled up. It is to be spoken also to the lamp, … : "ΒΟΑΣΟΧ ΩΑΕΗ ΙΑΩΙΗ ΩΙΑΗ ΝΙΧΗΑΡΟΠΛΗΞΣΘΟΜ ΩΘΩ… Υ ΙΕ ΙΩ ΗΙ ΙΑΗΛ ΙΡΜΟΥΧ ΩΝΟΡ ΩΕΥΕ ΙΥΩ ΕΑΩ ΣΑΒΑΩΘ …"[32]

But in many places in the Greco-Egyptian ritual manuals the seven Greek vowels themselves appear in a form that suggests that special significance has been attributed to their *visual representation*, as if the inscription of the vowel symbols extended or transcended their vocalic pronunciation. This phenomenon appears most vividly in the so-called *carmina figurata*, the named geometric arrangements in which magical texts would instruct words and names to be inscribed on corresponding amulets. By constructing a palindrome, *klima* ("seven-layered"), *pterugion* ("wing"), or *plinthion* ("square") out of a magical name, a ritual expert would be representing that name in multiple dimensions, and thereby deriving increased power from the name—or, as Christopher Faraone has proposed, representing the disappearance of a potentially dangerous name.[33] Although *carmina figurata* were employed to represent a variety of *voces magicae*, they seem to have been especially popular for representing vowels:[34]

1991), 190–95; Heinz J. Thissen, "Ägyptologische Beiträge zu den griechischen magischen Papyri," in *Religion und Philosophie im alten Ägypten*, ed. Ursula Verheven and Erhart Graefe, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 39 (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), 297–302; and recent collections, Magali de Haro Sanchez, ed., *Écrire la magie*; Michel Tardieu, Anne Van den Kerchove, and Michela Zago, eds., *Noms barbares 1: Formes et contexts d'une pratique magique* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). The conference "Noms barbares 2" was held in June 2008, and its papers are summarized in Lucia Saudelli, "Noms barbares 2," *La lettre du Collège de France*, no. 24 (December 1, 2008): 29–30.

32 *PGM* II.10–15, trans. John Dillion, in *GMPT*, 12. Note in this case that the vowels have come into association with the divine name IAO, which was connected with the "unpronounceable" Jewish divine name *YHWH*.

33 Christopher Faraone, *Vanishing Acts on Ancient Greek Amulets: From Oral Performance to Visual Design* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2012).

34 Von Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 58–60; W. Deonna, "ABRA, ABRACA: La croix-talisman de Lausanne," *Geneva* 22 (1944): 120–34; C. Lenz, "Carmina Figurata," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 2 (1954): 910–12; David G. Martinez, *P. Michigan XVI: A Greek Love Charm from Egypt* (*P. Mich. 757*), American Studies in Papyrology 30 (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1991), 105–11; Faraone, *Vanishing Acts*.

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A E H I O Y Ω
E H I O Y Ω
H I O Y Ω
I O Y Ω
O Y Ω
Y Ω
Ω

klima[35]
(tiered)

A
E E
H H H
I I I I
O O O O O
Y Y Y Y Y Y
Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω

klima
(pyramidal)[36]

A E H I O Y Ω
E H I O Y Ω A
H I O Y Ω A E
I O Y Ω A E H
O Y Ω A E H I
Y Ω A E H I O
Ω A E H I O Y

pterugion[37]

35 *PGM* I.13–19; LXII.95–96; *P. Michigan* 136, 8.126–32, in W.H. Worrell, "Coptic Magical and Medical Texts," *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 23; cf. *ACM* no. 43.

36 *PGM* XCVIII; cf. *PGM* V.83–90 and XIXa. Palindromes were often constructed in "wings": thus a "vowel palindrome" AEHIOΘΩΩΘOIHEA in *PGM* CXXX.

37 *PGM* XIII.905–11.

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A A A A A A A
E E E E E E E
H H H H H H H
I I I I I I I
O O O O O O O
Y Y Y Y Y Y Y
Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω Ω

plinthion[38]

A E H I O Y Ω
E H I O Y Ω A
H I O Y Ω A E
I O Y Ω A E H
O Y Ω A E H I
Y Ω A E H I O
Ω A E H I O Y

plinthion[39]

Vowels were thus used in multiple ways to extend the visual power of magical amulets—and to symbolize angels, cosmic regions, or even Christ.[40] Indeed, it is a striking development in the use of writing that the vowels—originally a revolutionary contribution to the *phonetic* alphabet—could become concretely powerful as *visual* symbols. Furthermore, there is some evidence that this "materialization" of the vowel symbols developed in conjunction with a growing use of vowels as an actual part of certain types of invocational or mystical liturgy. An *oneiraitēton* invokes a power "whose name is composed of 30 letters, in which are the seven vowels, through which you name [the] universe, gods, lords."[41] A Coptic ritual text invokes a power "by the names of the seven

38 *PGM* XXXVI.204–10, XLII, XLIV.

39 *PGM* X.43–50.

40 P. Oxy. VI.924 (vowel symbols in Christian amulet); London Ms. Or. 5525.116–19, in Angelicus M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptisches Zaubertexte* (Brussels: Edition de la Fondation égyptologique reine Elisabeth, 1931) 1:20 and 3:29 = *ACM* no. 64 (vowel symbols with corresponding archangels); *PGM* X.42–49 (vowel symbols corresponding archangels); Cf. Miletus theatre inscription (C/G II 2895) with changing vowel sets addressed as archangels and invoked for civic protection: Rangar H. Cline, "Archangels, Magical Amulets, and the Defense of Late Antique Miletus," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4, no. 1 (2011): 55–78.

41 *PGM* VII.706–07, trans. W.C. Grese, in *GMPT*, 138.

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stoicheia which are inscribed in the breast of the Father: these are A (×7) E (×7) H (×7) I (×7) O (×7) Y (×7) Ω (×7)."[42] And Ammianus Marcellinus lists, among the elite practitioners of esoteric ceremonies executed in a fourth-century imperial purge,

> ... a young man in the public baths ... [who was] noticed touching the marble of the bath and his own breast alternately with the fingers of both hands, reciting the seven Greek vowels as he did so. He believed that this would relieve a stomach complaint, but he was dragged into court, tortured, and beheaded.[43]

This sort of vowel mysticism and its incantations may have followed from a Greek philosophical idea of regarding the vowels as uniquely powerful *stoicheia*—utterable symbols of cosmic forces and their corresponding sounds. Franz von Dornseiff, whose *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* is still the basic work on the subject, traced these traditions to the very concept of the written letter in Greek culture: a polyvalent symbol for number, musical note, and vocalized sound.[44] Through centuries of Orphic and Pythagorean speculation on the cosmic nature of "true" sounds and planetary harmonies, there developed the notion that humans might participate in those harmonies through ritually "singing" the vowels. And it is important to note that in the development of these systems of thought there was never a firm border between liturgical *participation in* and theurgical *control of* the cosmic elements through chanting their sounds.[45]

In late antiquity, vowel liturgies were taken up by Christians such as Clement of Alexandria as expressions of God's nature (referring to Rev. 1:8's *Alpha* and *Omega*) or name (the mysterious, vowel-less Tetragrammaton of the Jewish Bible, YHWH), and by more eclectic religious sects as a suprahuman

42 London Ms. 6794.40–42 = *ACM* no. 129, ed. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptisches Zaubertexte*, 1: 31; R.W. Daniel, "Some Phylaktêria," *ZPE* 25 (1977): 151; Christopher A. Faraone and Roy Kotansky, "An Inscribed Gold Phylactery in Stamford, Connecticut," *ZPE* 75 (1988): 261–62.

43 Ammianus 29.2.28, trans. Walter Hamilton, *The Later Roman Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 380–81.

44 Von Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 11–16.

45 On the use of Greek vowels in mysticism and liturgy see especially Charles Émile Ruelle, "Le chant des sept voyelles grecques," *Revue des études grecques* 2 (1889): 38–44; H. LeClerq, "Alphabet vocalique des gnostiques," in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, (Paris: Librairi Letouzey et Anê, 1907), 1.1268–88; Von Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 35–60; Billigmeier, "Alphabets," 217; Joscelyn Godwin, *Mystery of the Seven Vowels: In Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapid, MI: Red Wheel Weiser, 1991); Sarah Iles Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Role in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature*, American Classical Studies 21 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 90–110.

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language or means of transcendence.[46] For example, Marcus, a disciple of the great Christian thinker Valentinus, is credited with the following discourse, a vowel liturgy meant to bring a congregation mimetically into participation with heavenly choirs:

> The first heaven utters the Alpha, the one after it Epsilon, the third Eta, the fourth, which is in the middle of the seven, utters the force (or: sound) of Iota, the fifth Omicron, the sixth Upsilon, and the seventh, which is the fourth from the middle, expresses the Omega … All these powers, he says, when lined to one another, sound forth the praises of him by whom they were brought forth. The glory of this sound is sent up again to the Forefather. The echo of this utterance of praise is brought down to earth, according to him, and becomes the shaper and parent of the things on earth.[47]

Marcus' liturgy simultaneously reflects two different ritual traditions in the late antique Mediterranean world. The image of entire heavens in the process of chanting praises to God reflects apocalyptic images of heavenly liturgy, at that time in abundant circulation among Jewish and Christian communities throughout the Mediterranean world.[48] The description of the different tones, symbolized by vowels, each emitting from a different heavenly stratum and coming together in harmony, recalls Platonic-Pythagorean images of cosmic sounds, such as that in the Myth of Er: "On each of the rims of the [celestial] circles a Siren stood, borne around in its revolution and uttering one sound, one note, and from all the eight there was the concord of a single harmony."[49] It is likely that Marcus and others were interweaving these rather similar

46 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 6.16.141; compare Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 11.6.36; and in general J. Vergote, "Clément d'Alexandrie et l'écriture égyptienne," *Le Muséon* 52 (1939): 205–7; Von Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 122–25.

47 *Apud* Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus. Haereses*, 1.14.7, trans. Werner Foerster, in R. McL. Wilson, ed., *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, trans. Werner Foerster, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 207; von Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 126–33; Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity*, Magic in History (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 45–58.

48 E.g., *1 Enoch* 71:11–12; *Ascension of Isaiah* 7–10; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 16–18. On the Jewish tradition of heavenly liturgy see Martha Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the 'Hekhalot' Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 59 (1988): 91–93; Carol A. Newsom, "He Has Established for Himself Priests: Human and Angelic Priesthood in the Qumran Sabbath Shirot," in *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Suppl. 8 (Sheffield, 1990), 101–20.

49 Plato, *Republic*, 617B, trans. Paul Shorey, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

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traditions, playing with the mystical elements of each in order to lead participants through a kind of heavenly ascent to a mystical identification with the pure elements of the cosmos: "the soul also, when for its purification it is in need and distress, exclaims Ω, as a sign of praise, so that the soul above may recognize its kinship with it and may send down to it a helper."[50]

The vowel liturgies, it seems, expressed a certain conviction in, and longing for, a "perfect order" in the heavens. And yet the practice of the liturgies—and the utterance of *voces magicae* in general—seem to reflect a desire to transcend ordinary speech, to imitate the "speech" of the gods or the *stoicheia.* Perspectives on the origin and function of *voces magicae* have ranged from the scholarly effort to uncover concealed or bastardized foreign words (especially with consonantal *voces magicae* like "*choch bachouch*")[51] to attention to scribal efforts to construct a transcendent or divine speech. The most important new interpretations revolve around the construction of the foreign or exotic itself, to propel an incantation or amulet through the force of linguistic alterity or "weirdness" or to imagine alternative, hybrid languages of incantation.[52]

But in the actual writing of vowels and *voces magicae*—their visual representations on amulets and their corresponding manuals—one finds sound and image perpetually reflecting each other. The visual power of a *klima* is "implied" when strings of vowels are presented in the appropriate sequence of A EE HHH IIII OOOOO YYYYYY ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ.[53] When one utters vowels in such a sequence one presumably "draws" the *klima* vocally—thus the name

50 *Apud* Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, I.*14.8*, translation based on that of Foerster in Wilson, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, 1: 208.

51 On assumptions of, and efforts to disentangle, foreign words, see esp. Gideon Bohak, "Hebrew, Hebrew Everywhere? Notes on the Interpretation of Voces Magicae," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, Magic in History (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 69–82; Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

52 See above, Frankfurter, Chapter 22. The relevant bibliography includes: Bronislaw Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1978), 2: 218–23; Patricia Cox Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman*, ed. A.H. Armstrong, World Spirituality 15 (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 481–505. H.S. Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay on the Power of Words," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 105–58; Michel Tardieu, "'Ceux qui font la voix des oiseaux': les dénominations de langues," in *Noms Barbares I*, 143–53; Nicolas Corre, "Noms barbares et 'barbarisation' dans les formules efficaces latines.," in *Noms Barbares I*, 93–108; Sabina Crippa, "Les Savoirs des voix magiques. Réflexion sur la catégorie du rite," in *Écrire la magie*, 239–50.

53 *PGM* I.26; IV.1005–06; XIII.207–08, 626, 631, 856–57; cf. V.81–90; and see Faraone and Kotansky, "An Inscribed Gold Phylactery in Stamford, Connecticut," 265.

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carmina figurata ("shaped hymns"). Another magical text instructs one to "speak the whole name thus, in wing formation [*pterugoeidôs*]," referring to the word AKRAKANARBA written in diminishing order as if to fit into the shape of a *pterugion*.[54] Thus the *carmina figurata* and any ritual representation of vowels were meant quite expressly to carry on the utterance of those vowels in some particular liturgical fashion.

4 Greek Letters as Iconic Media: Inspirations of the Hieroglyph

4.1 Ephesia grammata

The Greek alphabet did not originally carry iconic—pictographic—symbolism but simply conveyed sounds. Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, on the other hand, long maintained iconic features, such that the signs themselves, whether phonetic or semantic in value, mediated the powers of the names and incantations they spelled. These are two quite different concepts of writing, as Goody and Watt noted long-ago;[55] and yet they were already influencing each other in the Mediterranean world by the early Hellenistic period, with the so-called *Ephesia grammata*: strings of incomprehensible syllables that became a staple of private liturgy and cursing in Greco-Roman times.[56] We tend to assume an oral component in the writing of *Ephesia grammata* because of the orality of Greek writing in general and the apparent orality of *voces magicae* in the Greek Magical Papyri. However, the earliest reference to *Ephesia grammata* describes them as *carried* in "sewn pouches," implying that they held power *in written form*.[57] Furthermore, there were traditions that boxers and wrestlers became invincible by wearing "Ephesian letters."[58]

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54 *PGM* II.1–2 (cf. 11.4–5), trans. John Dillon, in *GMPT*, 12. Cf. PGM IV.1004–05: "Speak your holy name in symbolic fashion [*symbolikôi schêmati*]." Cf. Faraone, *Vanishing Acts*.

55 Goody and Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," 34–44.

56 See esp. Chester C. McCown, "The Ephesia Grammata in Popular Belief," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 4 (1923): 128–40; L.H. Jeffrey, "Further Comments on Archaic Greek Inscriptions," *Annual of the British School of Athens* 50 (1955): 75–76; Roy Kotansky, "A Silver Phylactery for Pain," *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 11 (1983): 110–12; Alberto Bernabé, "The Ephesia Grammata: Genesis of a Magical Formula," in *The Getty Hexameters: Poetry, Magic, and Mystery in Ancient Selinous*, ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 71–96.

57 Anaxilas, Fr. 18 Kock in Jeffrey, "Further Comments on Archaic Greek Inscriptions," 76; Bernabé, "Genesis of a Magical Formula," 72.

58 E.g., the story of the Milesian and Ephesian letters preserved in *Suidae s.v. ephesia grammata* in Ada Adler, ed., "Ephesia Grammata," in *Suidae Lexicon*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928), 483, no. 3864; Bernabé, "Genesis of a Magical Formula," 73. Bernabé himself argues

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This esoteric category of written words thus seems to have had a predominantly iconic function, probably the work of specific ritual experts, signaling a craft in the ritual inscription of "letters."[59] By labelling these obscure signs "Ephesian," of course, Greeks reflected the alienness of whatever *Ephesia grammata* originally were, describing what may have been a distinctly non-Greek set of symbols under the rubric of a city long-viewed as a place of odd religions (cf. Acts 19:17–19). In their origin, the *Ephesia grammata* may not have been Greek letters at all, but exotic symbols purveyed as magical—perhaps an innovation from other exotic writing systems, *like* Egyptian hieroglyphs.

In their popular use in Greek ritual traditions, however, *Ephesia grammata* worked distinctly as incantations: pronounceable, formed of Greek letters, with luscious syllables like *lix, tetrax, damnameneus, ablanathanalba*, etc. With the expansion of the "corpus" of *Ephesia grammata*, recognizable names and words were incorporated. So in spite of their name—*grammata*—and their effectiveness on tablets, *Ephesia grammata* served as components of oral incantations: "Those who *intoned* them," says Diogenianus, "conquered in everything."[60] Their inscription on statues, amulets, or lead tablets would thus also reflect an "oral" communication transmitted or preserved in writing. And yet the term itself expresses a view towards the written word itself as sacred, conveying power in its material and amuletic form.

Ultimately, we might conclude, *Ephesia grammata* were whatever a ritual expert or craftsman said they were, from strange syllables and names to mysterious pseudo-letters—what we designate *charaktēres*. The term (and attribution to Ephesus) endowed the syllables or symbols with a particular, iconic, and geographically-rooted significance: that *Ephesia grammata* were not just nonsense.

4.2 Nomina sacra

But another writing system develops in Greek (and Coptic) in the third/fourth centuries CE among Christian scribes, endowing letters, words, and names

that a particular set of *voces magicae* called *Ephesia grammata*, "evolve[d] from a completely comprehensible Greek narrative text originally composed in dactylic hexameters" (Bernabé, "Genesis of a Magical Formula," 77). The argument assumes that the very *voces magicae* supplied by the *late second-century* CE(!) Clement of Alexandria (Bernabé, "Genesis of a Magical Formula," 75–76) are the only possible ones associated with *Ephesia grammata*. But more importantly, Bernabé here follows a common model in classical approaches to magic, that magical phenomena like *voces magicae* necessarily descend from a more coherent form—in a sort of "devolution."

59 See esp. Graf, "Magie et écriture: Quelques réflexions."

60 Diogenianus, 4.77, trans. McCown, "The Ephesia Grammata in Popular Belief," 131.

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with iconic value and their material media with transmittable potency: the *nomina sacra*. In this case, words associated with divine figures, like *Christos, Kyrios, pneuma, Iēsous*, and so on would be collapsed into two or three letters with an overstrike to serve as a shorthand in the writing of scripture, liturgy, and even correspondence.[61] *Nomina sacra* were not simply a convenience or a theological statement, however: the practice involved the demarcation and elevation of holy names as iconic vehicles of power apart from the vocalic text in which they were used.[62] One may say that *nomina sacra* rendered names and words "magical"—imbued with power; and indeed, some Coptic ritual texts used the overstrike to endow new names and clusters of letters with this magical status—to elevate them from mundane writing and allow them to index the agency of the holy beings denoted.[63]

Ephesia grammata and *nomina sacra* both developed out of scribes' conceptualization of certain written words as not simply graphemes for communication or record-keeping but visual images and material vehicles: that the writing of holy or mysterious names or words actually formed physical symbols for the presence of the named being. And yet these iconic conceptualizations of special names and words did not emerge out of the scribal craft alone, for scribality (especially in Egypt, but certainly also in Greece) developed with an awareness of other, more priestly and iconic, writing systems in the ancient world, like Egyptian. It is quite likely that the exotic phenomenon of the Egyptian hieroglyph—as a graphic concept, a familiar cultural artifact, and the subject of much Greek literary discussion—influenced the invention and popularity of these innovations in the writing of Greek, such that its phonetic alphabet came to be refigured in certain ritual contexts as symbolic.

4.3 *The Mysteries of the Greek Letters*

The legacy of the hieroglyph emerges most clearly in late antiquity, with speculations on the Greek alphabet as secretly pictographic. Insofar as Greek letters did not originally hold pictographic or logographic value in and of themselves,

61 Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 26–48; Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 95–134.

62 Hurtado, *Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 132.

63 Cf. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, 47. The magical "presence" conveyed in *nomina sacra* does not imply that papyri inscribed with *nomina sacra* therefore became prohibited from disposal or misuse. The range of uses and protections applied to ritual texts in antiquity and comparatively can vary by locale, monastery, culture, and time period: see Anne Marie Luijendijk, "Sacred Scriptures as Trash: Biblical Papyri from Oxyrhynchus," *VC* 64 (2010): 217–54.

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such speculation would have reflected an intense awareness that *other* writing systems in the world *were* logographic or pictorial. Although Greeks themselves never mastered the interpretation of hieroglyphs, famous attempts such as Horapollon's *Hieroglyphica* (fourth century CE) demonstrate a fascination with the idea that letters might be pictures.[64] In the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (second century CE) Jesus describes the *alpha*: "… how it has lines and a middle mark which goes through the pair of lines which you see, (how these lines) converge, rise, turn in the dance, three signs of the same kind, subject to and supporting one another, of equal proportions; here you have the lines of the Alpha."[65] A fifth- or sixth-century CE Coptic treatise on the mysteries of the Greek letters analyzes the iconography of the alphabet in even greater depth:

> The *delta* is the image of the upper sky, the invisible, the sky of skies. And the lower line of the *delta* is the image of the invisible earth which is underneath the abyss. And the sky of skies, whose figure is indescribable, descends by its extremities, to the east and to the west, to lose itself in all the inexpressible depth, and to be connected to the lower earth in the abyss, according to an exalted mystery; thus it conforms to the iconography of the *delta*.[66]

Clearly an *alpha* or *delta* with such pregnant symbolism would have vastly more iconic power as an element in an amulet, curse, or protective inscription than if it merely stood for a phonetic sound. Indeed, what is apparent in such letter speculations is an attempt to recapture or reinvest the type of symbolism with which hieroglyphs were supposed to be endowed, but now in the *stoicheia* of the Greek alphabet. Greek letters themselves might become truly magical in a way reminiscent of hieroglyphic symbols.

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64 Erik Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition.* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1961), 43–49. On Clement of Alexandria's more accurate achievements in describing hieroglyphs see Vergote, "Clément d'Alexandrie et l'écriture égyptienne," 199–221.

65 *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 6.4, trans. O. Cullman, in Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1: *Gospels and Related Writings*, rev. ed., ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia 1991), 445. This passage seems to have attained some popularity in esoteric Christianity: see Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, 1.20.

66 A. Hebbelynck, *Les Mystères des lettres grecques* (Louvain: Istas, 1902), 115. On this text see now Cordula Bandt, *Traktat "Vom Mysterium der Buchstaben": Kritischer Text mit Einführung, Übersetzung und Anmerkungen*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 162 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).

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4.4 Isopsephy/Gematria

In other ways too Greek (and Coptic) writing took on additional ritual dimensions, from simply representing communication or record to conveying magical efficacy through the symbolic and material. In both Greek and Hebrew, for example, the alphabet served also for numbers, allowing for esoteric traditions of concealing names in numbers and numbers in names (called *isopsephy* in Greek and *gematria* in Hebrew).[67] The classic example—in fact, of *gematria* translated into Greek—involves the "number of the Beast" in Revelation chapter 13. 666 is equivalent to "Nero Caesar" in Hebrew transliteration; but more importantly, the concealed name inscribed on the body gives magical access to the market (Rev 13.16–17) and serves in the text as a parody of the heavenly seals that protect the righteous (14.1). The esoteric concealing of names in numbers thus endows magically protective value.

4.5 *Cryptography*

Another way of mystifying the value of letters involved the practice of cryptography, in which individual scribes or groups would develop a system of equivalences in which certain letters could stand for others. In Coptic monastic cryptography, for example, letter substitution codes might conceal an invocation to God, while the inscription appears to be nonsense. Such practices served not to protect heterodox content but to create a second degree of magical efficacy through manipulation of the alphabet, sometimes in magical texts and amulets, sometimes in the apotropaic inscriptions or prayers on monks' cell walls.[68] Certainly not every use of cryptography (nor *nomina sacra*) carried magical implications, and yet their use in writing always involved some reflection on the nature of names, writing, communication, and the nature of the letter itself as a symbol. Writing becomes, in such practices, an esoteric pursuit, a technique of turning letter combinations into cyphers for names, prayers, and other materials and to endow them, ultimately, with magic.

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67 AnneMarie Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord: Early Christians and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, HTS 60 (Cambridge: Harvard Divinity School, 2008), 219–21.

68 See Frederik Wisse, "Language Mysticism in the Nag Hammadi Texts and in Early Coptic Monasticism, I: Cryptography," *Enchoria* 9 (1979): 101–20; Jean Doresse, "Cryptography," *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), vol. 8, 65–69; Jacco Dieleman, "Cryptography at the Monastery of Deir El-Bachit," in *Honi soit qui mal y pense: Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen*, ed. Hermann Knuf, Christian Leitz, and Daniel von Recklinghausen, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 194 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 511–17; Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual, 100–300 CE*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 80–101.

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5 *Charaktēres* and the Legacy of the Hieroglyph[69]

Charaktēr is the general term for the small designs and figures found in lines or clusters on magical papyri and gems, having no apparent source in any known alphabet, and yet employed in such a customary, even familiar way that a meaning (albeit inutterable) is implied in their sequence or arrangement.[70] The most common forms of magical *charaktēres* consist of asterisks and configurations of straight lines with small circles or lobes on each end (see illustration). They appear in a variety of contexts, ranging from loose clusters inscribed on certain magical gems, to their integration with a larger drawing or *figura* on a magical text or tablet, to integration with a recognizably alphabetic text as if to suggest phonetic symbols "transcendent" of the normal alphabet, much as *voces magicae* were supposed to be transcendent of normal language (Illustrations 23.1–23.3).

In magical papyri the *charaktēr* sequences are invariably meant to be inscribed on substances that, thereby, assume empowered, apotropaic, or otherwise magical significance; for example, "Offer a sacrifice, inscribe the following *charaktēres* on a silver tablet and put frankincense over them. Wear it as an amulet. It will freely render service …"[71] And in greater detail:

> Take a seven-leafed sprig of laurel and hold it in your right hand as you summon the heavenly gods and chthonic daimons. Write on the sprig of laurel the seven *charaktēres* for deliverance. The *charaktēres* are these: [*charaktēres*] … the first *charaktēr* onto the first leaf, then the second again in the same way onto the second leaf until there is a matching up of the 7 *charaktēres* and 7 leaves. But be careful not to lose a leaf [and] do harm to yourself. For this is the body's greatest protective charm, by which all are made subject, and seas and rocks tremble, and daimons

69 Since the publication of my "Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic" in 1994, Richard Gordon issued two important essays on the *charaktēres* that endorsed the theory of the hieroglyph's influence: Richard Gordon, "*Signa Nova et Inaudita.* The Theory and Practice of Invented Signs (*Charaktēres*) in Graeco-Egyptian Magical Texts," *MHNH* 11 (2011): 15–44; and idem, "*Charaktēres* between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-Invention," in *Les Savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'antiquité à la renaissance*, ed. Véronique Dasen and Jean-Michel Spieser (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 253–300.

70 See the general description in A Delatte and Philippe Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1964), 360–61.

71 *PGM* XXXVI.280–81, trans. Hubert Martin, Jr. in *GMPT*, 276.

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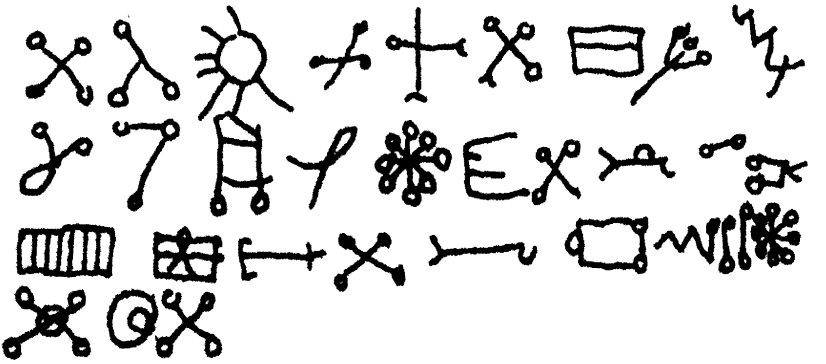

ILLUSTRATION 23.1 *Charaktēres* on lead tablet from Rome; 4th century CE. Traced from: Wunsch, "Deisidaimoniaka," *Archiv für Religionwissenschaft* 12 (1909): 37

ILLUSTRATION 23.2 *Charaktēres* on cloth amulet from Cairo Geniza; 5th–6th centuries CE (T-S A. S. 142.174). Traced from: Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 216–17

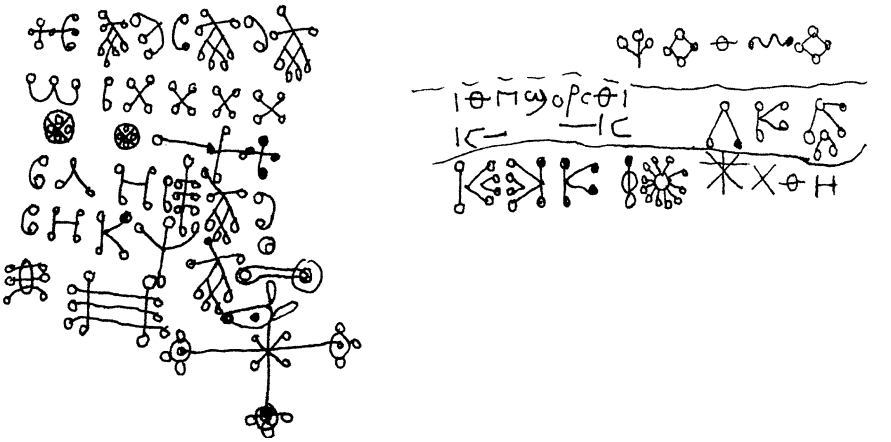

ILLUSTRATION 23.3 *Charaktēres* on leather strip. London, British Museum, Hay 10434r, v (= ACM #80). Egypt, sixth–seventh centuries CE
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> [avoid] the *charaktēres'* magical powers which you are about to have. For it is the greatest protective charm for the rite so that you fear nothing.[72]

Even more than vowels, then, magical *charaktēres* function in these texts primarily as visual symbols—as a kind of sacred writing associated both with the technical preparation of magical substances and the pronunciation of magical spells. Moreover, it would appear that the semantic power of *charaktēres* was not dependent on actual antecedents or "meanings" to the symbols. It was based, rather, on the *idea* of a sacred alphabet or writing system.

Obviously when one finds such "artificial" writing it is often difficult to tell whether it is a product of falsified literacy, deliberately constructed magical symbols, or a systematic cryptography in which each character stands for a particular sound, name, or deity.[73] The magical *charaktēres* used throughout Greco-Roman, Greco-Egyptian, and Coptic ritual texts and amulets have enough formal diversity to suppose that they were, like artificial writing, often improvised. But the dominant style of composition, with bent or crossed lines with bulbs on the ends, suggests that professionals shared a *purpose*, if not in some areas an actual system, in composing magical *charaktēres*—indeed, in some cases regarding this graphic tradition as imported wisdom from a pan-Mediterranean ritual expertise.[74]

Magical *charaktēres* functioned, it seems, not so much as "artificial" writing or cryptography, but as "sacred" writing, in the sense of heavenly books.[75] From the distinctive attitude toward the written word in the late antique Mediterranean world had arisen a widespread folklore of the heavenly book

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72 *PGM* 1.264–76, trans. E.N. O'Neil in *GMPT*, 10.

73 See, for example, the "letters" inscribed on some magical gems, see Morton Smith, "Relations Between Magical Papyri and Magical Gems," in *Acts of the XVth International Congress of Papyrology*, vol. III, Papyrologica Bruxellensia 18 (Brussels, 1979), 135. Heike Sternberg-El Hotabi, "Der Untergang der Hieroglyphenschrift: Schriftverfall und Schrifttod im Ägypten der griechisch-römischen Zeit," *Chronique d'Égypte* 69 (1994): 218–45.

74 Mordecai Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim: A Newly Recovered Book of Magic from the Talmudic Period* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966), 83, 86; Michael A. Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries*, SBL Texts and Translations 25 (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1983), 46; C. Jullian, "Au champ magique de Glozel," *Revue des études anciennes* 29, no. 2 (1927): 162–66. On *charaktēres* as imported scribal tradition see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*, 270–74.

75 That the use of characters tended *not* to be cryptographic is demonstrated by the important Jewish apocalypse-grimoire *Sepher Ha-Razim*, whose manuscripts differ considerably on the characters meant to denote the same set of angels' names; see Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries*, 35.

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whose contents would be intelligible only to deities, angels, or the enlightened.[76] In the second-century Christian *Shepherd of Hermas*, for example, the protagonist receives a small book from a divine figure and begs to copy it; but "I could not distinguish the syllables" until, "after fifteen days, when I had fasted and prayed greatly to the Lord, the knowledge of the writing was revealed to me."[77] Such a view of the writing in heavenly books is also evident in the Egyptian Christian *Gospel of Truth*, which describes the "letters" of

> … the living book which [the Father] revealed to the aeons, at the end, as [his letters], revealing how they are not vowels nor are they consonants, so that one might read them and think of something foolish, but they are letters of the truth which they alone speak who know them. Each letter is a complete thought, like a complete book, since they are letters written by the Unity, the Father having written them for the aeons in order that by means of his letters they should know the Father.[78]

In their fundamental difference from and superiority to Greek writing ("not vowels or consonants"), these heavenly letters seem to be idealizations of the hieroglyph itself, now imagined as each a "complete thought, like a complete book."[79] Could a similarly Egyptian myth of a divine writing system with logographic or even cosmic meaning lie behind the use of magical *charaktēres*? How were hieroglyphs themselves imagined in Greek and Roman literature?

Awe of hieroglyphs had certainly turned them into magical icons by the Roman period: in Iversen's words, "The mysterious symbolic qualities with which Greek ignorance of their true character endowed the hieroglyphs, became, therefore, their main charm and attraction."[80] Thus an incantation in

76 The standard works on this subject are Geo Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis (Upsalla: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1950); Miller, "In Praise of Nonsense," 486–92; and Wolfgang Speyer, "Das Buch als magisch-religiöser Kraftträger im griechischen und römischen Altertum," in *Das Buch als magisches und als Repräsentationsobjekt*, ed. Peter Ganz, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992). On the heavenly book tradition see esp. *2 Enoch* 22:10–23:6; 33:5–10; 40:2–5; *Ascension of Isaiah* 9:22.

77 Hermas, *Vis*. 2.1.3–2.2.1, ed. and trans. Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 18–19.

78 NHC I, *3* (= XII, 2), 22.39–23.28, trans. Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 43.

79 See Laurent Motte, "L'hiéroglyphe, d'Esna à l'Evangile de Vérité," in *Deuxième journée d'études coptes: Strasbourg 25 Mai 1984*, Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte 3 (Louvain: Peeters, 1986), 111–16.

80 Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition*, 45.

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the Greek Magical Papyri opens typically with a claim that "I speak your names which Hermes *trismegistos* wrote in Heliopolis with hieroglyphic letters."[81] It would make sense that these incomprehensible yet mysterious signs might, in the more general context of heavenly books and writing, function as a prototype or archetype for a body of sacred characters that was magical in presence but lacked referential meaning. And it is therefore striking to find Apuleius describing the "letters" of an Egyptian ritual text in terms more suitable for magical *charaktēres*:

> [The priest] brought out from the hidden quarters of the shrine certain books in which the writing was in undecipherable letters. Some of them conveyed, through forms of all kinds of animals, abridged expressions of traditional sayings; others barred the possibility of being read from the curiosity of the profane, in that *their extremities were knotted and curved like wheels or closely intertwined like vine-tendrils.* From these writings he indicated to me the preparations necessary for the rite of initiation.[82]

Apuleius imagines two types of Egyptian writing here: hieroglyphs (forms of animals) and *charaktēres* (knotted and curved like wheels), both of which are meant to conceal meaning. Both comprise the "undecipherable" sacred writing of the Egyptians. Thus we see *charaktēres* "projected" into Egyptian texts, which consequently represent an authoritative source for their secret meanings.

The link between *charaktēres* and hieroglyphs also seems to appear in their respective relationships to *figurae magicae*, the often elaborate iconography that organizes the internal field of many amulets or is appended to spells in ritual handbooks. One finds, indeed, that the iconographical tradition in Greco-Egyptian amulets was clearly rooted in native Egyptian iconography.[83] The use of images (two- or three-dimensional) in tandem with a text for ritual purposes had considerable antiquity in Egypt. Pictures, as "super-hieroglyphs," often functioned as literal extensions of the text-as supplementary description or magical force.[84] And whether such images portrayed gift-bearers of the next

81 *PGM* IV.885–87, trans. W.C. Grese in *GMPT*, 55; Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries*, 29–30.

82 Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 11.22, trans. John Gwyn Griffiths, *The Isis-Book:* (*Metamorphoses, Book XI*), EPRO 39 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 96–97, emphasis mine. Griffiths' summary of attempts to relate the circular and intertwined letters to late forms of hieratic Egyptian (285) exhibits the tenuousness of this identification.

83 See above, Dasen and Nagy, Chapter 17.

84 Baines, "Literacy and Ancient Egyptian Society," 576, 587, 593 n.5; Herman Te Velde, "Egyptian Hieroglyphs as Signs, Symbols and Gods," *Visible Religion* 4/5 (1985/6): 63–72.

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world, the monstrous guardian of a secret gate to the next world, or a bound or speared image of a donkey, they were supposed to function materially and effectively. For example, it was customary in Egyptian rituals of execration to destroy an image of the god Seth, who signified all that was marginal and threatening to state, cosmos, and order. But this ritual execration carried over into texts and reliefs, which often posed Seth as a bound or imprisoned ass: by "binding" him in the image one incapacitated his power in reality.[85]

The iconographic component of magical texts in Egypt gained particular importance after the fourth century, among the Coptic ritual manuals, which often include images drawn in the style of *charaktēres*. But iconography seems to have been a vital part of amulets and rituals even during the period represented by the Greek Magical Papyri (first to fourth centuries CE). Images in this corpus include not only traditional Egyptian symbols like the "Eye of Horus," the scarab, the serpent, and images of the Egyptian chaos-god Seth, but also more novel drawings, often of whip-bearing warrior figures like the anguipede.[86] These drawings were generally meant to be ritually inscribed on a second medium, which thereby became an amulet.[87] Although there were certainly broad influences and iconographical traditions reflected in the figures in the Magical Papyri, the semiotic legacy of the Egyptian hieroglyph in motivating the use of efficacious images and *charaktēres* in the Magical Papyri is quite apparent. In some cases, it seems, scribes made use of real hieroglyphic characters or Egyptian iconography.[88]

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85 Cf. Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 50; Philippe Derchain, "Àpropos d'une stèle magique du Musée Kestner, à Hanovre," *Revue d'égyptologie* 16 (1964): 19–23; Philippe Derchain, *Le papyrus Salt 825: Rituel pour la conservátion de la vie en Égypte*, vol. 1, Mémoires de l'Académie Royale du Belgique 58 (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1965); Maarten J. Raven, "Wax in Egyptian Magic and Symbolism," *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* 64 (1983): 7–47; Christopher A. Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of 'Voodoo Dolls' in Ancient Greece," *Classical Antiquity* 10, no. 2 (1991): 165–205; and above, Wilburn, chapter 18.

86 Eye of Horus: *PGM* III.416ff., V.85ff.; *PDM* lxi.92–94; Scarab: *PGM* II.155–60; Serpent: *PGM* V.590ff; Seth: *PGM* VII.941ff., XII.2lff., XXXVI. 1off. and 86ff; Anguipede: *PGM* III.70ff., XXXVI.245ff.

87 See Dasen and Nagy, above, Chapter 17.

88 Efforts to understand the range of images in the PGM include Richard Wunsch, *Antikes Zaubergerät aus Pergamon*, Jahrbuch des kaiserlich deutschen archäologischen Instituts. Ergänzungsheft 6 (Berlin: Reimer, 1905), 32–35; Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets: Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 22–26; Irene Grumach, "On the History of a Coptic Figura Magica," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Papyrology*, ed. Deborah H. Samuel, American Studies in Papyrology 7 (Toronto: A. M. Hakkert, 1970), 169–81; Wortmann, "Neue Magische Texte," 62–112; A. Delatte, "Études sur la magie grecque," *Musée belge: Revue de philologie classique* 18 (1914): 23–60; William M. Brashear, *Magica Varia*, Papyrologica Bruxellensia 25 (Brussels: Fondation égyptologique reine Élisabeth, 1991), 74–79.

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A more vivid use of *charaktēres* according to an Egyptian hieroglyphic model appears in the II–III CE Coptic *Books of Jeu*. The texts depict symbols and *voces magicae* that should be copied as keys (or passport stamps) for the adept's heavenly ascent.[89] Adepts apparently used these seals in ritual "ascents" through gates watched by evil "toll-collector" archons (whose roles in obstructing the unsealed closely resemble the obstructing demons in Egyptian mortuary texts, still being copied in the early Roman period).[90] Penetration of each gate depended upon having the appropriate seal, each of which is drawn in the text in the traditional style of the *charaktēr*. Conveying as they do the written word as *apotropaion*, as otherworldly passport, *The Books of Jeu* are uniquely beholden to Egyptian textual and scribal traditions; yet they were written to serve a broader Mediterranean tradition of mystical ascent and thus demonstrate another way that writing itself acquired ritual value beyond Egyptian temples.

Even more direct links between *charaktēres* and hieroglyphs appear in Greco-Egyptian magical gems and the designs in magical papyri for making talismanic "stelae." Magical gems often deliberately imitate the iconographic arrangement of Egyptian magical stelae. In traditional representations of gods with magical powers a deity (often Horus) is surrounded with spells. But quite often in the gems the "spell" consists of *charaktēres*, only some of which can be identified as, or derived from, actual hieroglyphs.[91] One particularly

89 See Carl Schmidt and Violet MacDermot, *The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex*, vol. 13, Nag Hammadi Studies (Leiden: Brill, 1978). On their Egyptian legacy see Philip David Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 192–93; László Kákosy, "Gnosis und ägyptische Religion," in *Le origini dello gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina, 13–18 aprile 1966*, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 238–47. On the structure of heavenly ascent incorporating "seals," see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. P.W. Coxon (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 171–75, and Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the 'Hekhalot' Literature," 80–84. On the construction of *charaktēres* in *Books of Jeu* see Paul Corby Finney, "Did Gnostics Make Pictures?," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. Bentley Layton, vol. 1, Numen Suppl. 41 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 1:436–37; Kákosy, "Gnosis und ägyptische Religion"; and Anne van den Kerchove, "Le Livre du grand traité initiatique (Deux Livres de Ieou): Dessins et rites," in *Écrire la magie*, 109–20.

90 Cf. *Apocalypse of Paul* (NHC V, 2), p. 20; *Apocalypse of Elijah*, 1.9–12. On the continuity of Egyptian mortuary texts in the Roman period, see Mark Smith, *Traversing Eternity: Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Rita Lucarelli, "The Guardian-Demons of the Book of the Dead," *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 15 (2010): 85–102; David Frankfurter, "Amente Demons and Christian Syncretism," *ARG* 14 (2012): 83–101.

91 E.g. Delatte and Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* nos. 178–79, 183–86, 202, 376–77. The authors indicate specific hieroglyphs in nos. 178, 183, and 201. See in general above, Dasen and Nagy, Chapter 17.

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vivid example from the Hermitage provides a link between hieroglyphs and *charaktēres*: an image of the standing Osiris is surrounded with hieroglyphs that are authentic, but so scattered as to be unreadable and therefore entirely talismanic.[92]

In the Greek Magical Papyri ritual instructions often include drawing a rough cartouche or stele on an amulet according to a design in the papyrus. Within these "stelae" are *charaktēres*, often combined with other figures or actual hieroglyphs.[93] The use of the "stele" form, particularly in texts of Egyptian provenance, was evidently meant to imitate the frames in which one normally found hieroglyphs in Egypt.

With the decline of the priesthood under Roman rule, as well as the general illiteracy of the Greco-Egyptian populace with respect to traditional Egyptian writing, it would have been the rare individual who, presented with hieroglyphic inscriptions, could read them as anything more than arcane symbols of power. My present argument extends this observation of the practical significance of hieroglyphs as "letters of power" to the genesis of magical *charaktēres*, a diverse corpus of "letters of power" distinctive for its *lack* of a referential system (aside from rare and idiosyncratic exceptions). The argument, however, rests not on the haphazard linking of spurious parallels but on the widespread Greco-Roman fascination with hieroglyphs, coupled with the identical *functions* of magical *charaktēres* and hieroglyphs on amulets. One would hardly exclude influences from other "sacred alphabets" renowned in antiquity for the holiness and the material power of their script, like Hebrew, upon the diverse forms that magical *charaktēres* took in the Mediterranean world.[94]

In a subsequent stage of the magical *charaktēres* they appear as the actual "names" of cosmic powers: that is, with the pretense of pronounceability. A curse-tablet from Hebron (third to fifth centuries CE) opens: "I invoke you, *charaktēres* …"; another from Apamaea (fifth to sixth centuries CE) addresses the "Lords, most holy *charaktēres* …"; and a cloth amulet in Hebrew (fourth to seventh centuries CE; see illustration 23.2 above) invokes "you holy *charaktēres* and all praiseworthy letters …"[95] Furthermore, some spells use magical

92 Leningrad, Hermitage inv. 6624, in O. Ya. Neverov, "Gemmes, bagues et amulettes magiques du sud de l'URSS," in *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren*, ed. T.A. Edridge and Margreet de Boer, 3 vols., EPRO 68 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 840–1 and pl. CLXXI (=no. 21).

93 E.g., *PGM* III.294, 298; IV.2705–08; VII.215–17, 930–39; X.30–35; XLIX; LX.1–5; LXIV.1–12; CVI.1–10; cf. III.154–59. Cf. Kotansky, "A Silver Phylactery for Pain," 175–76. *Charaktēres* supplementing magical figures: *PGM* XXXVI.35–68, 178–87.

94 Cf. the "script imitative of Punic-Phoenician" on a magical gem published by Roy Kotansky, "A Magic Gem Inscribed in Greek and Artificial Phoenician," *ZPE* 85 (1991): 237–38.

95 B. Lifshitz, "Une tablette d'imprécation," *RB* 77 (1970): 81–83; *CTBS*, 203; Wilfred Van Rengen, "Deux défixions contra les bleus à Apamée," in *Apamée de Syrie*, ed. Janine Balty, Fouilles d'Apamée de Syrie, Miscellanea 13 (Brussels: Editions de Boccard, 1984), 213–34;

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charaktēres in such a way as to imply phonetic or name-equivalents: "I conjure you by the great and terrible names which the winds fear and the rocks split when they hear it: … [magical *charaktēres* drawn]"; or, in the aforementioned Miletus theatre inscription, seven magical *charaktēres* with their corresponding vowel sets are beseeched as "Holy Ones" and "archangels."[96]

It is true that the very indefinite nature of magical *charaktēres* facilitated the construction of *charaktēr*-systems, such as cryptographies for the Greek alphabet, or symbols for each of a series of cosmic bodies (angels, planets, dekans, *stoicheia*.[97] But the tendency to build such systems out of the infinite world of magical *charaktēres*, a tendency I would regard as *subsequent* to the growth of the magical *charaktēres* themselves, seems to reflect more than a general penchant for systems. The notion that *charaktēres* might function as a pronounceable alphabet seems to take us back to Greek speculation on the music of the spheres—sounds in this case that could not be represented by the letters of the alphabet.[98] In this way magical *charaktēres* themselves become *stoicheia*—"letters"—not only as additions to the alphabet but also in the sense of signs of the cosmic elements and their sounds. Thus the ineffable orality of Greek magic was combined with the concrete efficacy of the visual signifier in Egyptian magic. Magical *charaktēres* came to represent sounds inexpressible through the twenty six letters of the Greek alphabet.

6 Conclusion: The Magic of Writing

To speak of the magic of writing requires, first of all, a predominantly oral cultural setting in which the "fixing" of words, names, commands, and invocations on substances using graphic symbols involves a fundamental mystique. Like an

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Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1985), 216–17.

96 *PGM* XXXVI.264. Miletus inscription see above, note 40. Cf. *PGM* III.536: "I have spoken your signs and symbols (*ta sēmeia kai ta parasēma*)." Other spells or amulets using characters for names include *PGM* VII.399–404, 415; XII.398.

97 Wünsch, "Unedierte Fluchtafelne," *Archiv fur Religionswissenschaft* 12 (1909): 36–45; Delatte, "Études sur la magie grecque," 70–74; Van Rengen, "Deux défixions contra les bleus à Apamée," 216–19; Hans Georg Gundel, *Weltbild und Astrologie in den griechischen Zauberpapyri*, Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und antiken Rechtsgeschichte 53 (Munich: Beck, 1968), 52–55.

98 On the idiosyncratic nature of *charaktēr* systems see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion*, 141, and Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Semitic Texts and Studies 1 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 44–45.

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image, the name or word is imbued with the agency of the subject, the god, or the invocation rendered in permanent signs, often following some ritual performance. The text, indeed, functions somewhere between icon and ritual utterance—in every way transcending the transcription of speech or evocation of genre that those in literate cultures associate with writing and reading. (This does not mean that literate folk are immune to this mystique or to the magic of writing: as Gill describes, texts of many sorts will enjoy both "informative" and "*performative*" functions).[99]

"Magic" thus offers a qualitative evaluation of the significance and function of writing, or a form of writing (like *charaktēres*, or cryptography, or divorce contracts used for exorcism), for a client, an audience, or a culture. It also reflects on an additional mystique or charisma to the scribal craft itself—one that may derive not so much from graphic expertise as from the performance of inscribing secret or potent characters or verses, from angel names to gospel *incipit*s, for some ritual purpose.[100] And as the traditions and applications of *charaktēres* demonstrate, that scribal craft extended to the invention and mystification of new pseudo-alphabets that conveyed the magical power of the ancient world's pictographic writing systems and symbols. (And in so embracing forms of pseudo-letters the scribal craft opened itself to those "without letters" who were nevertheless capable of inscribing *charaktēres* or letter-like symbols on papyrus, stone, or gem).

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99 Sam D. Gill, "Nonliterate Traditions and Holy Books: Toward a New Model," in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 224–39.

100 Wolfgang Hartung, "Die Magie des Geschreibenen," in *Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Ursula Schaefer, ScriptOralia 53 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1993), 109–26; Theodore de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), chap. 6; David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), chap. 6.

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CHAPTER 24

Magic and the Forces of Materiality

David Frankfurter

1 Introduction

Does "magic" pertain usefully to the thing that is created, combined, or simply imbued with power over the course of a spell or ritual process? Many of the texts in the corpora of ancient spells culminate in the designation of some object that focuses the rite and materializes the spell: e.g., an image of Hermes from special dough,[1] a cake of bran and sandalwood to carry the name of a victim,[2] and a special ink used to write questions directed to corpses.[3] Lead *defixiones* often refer to themselves in their "lead-ness": "just as this lead is worthless and cold, so let that man and his property be worthless and cold."[4] Amulets, whether legible or not, involve words and names, symbols and icons, which transform the substance—metal, gemstone, or scrap of papyrus—into a thing that works against disease or demons.[5] A type of Coptic formulary appends a series of material applications to a long incantation (covering, in one case [P. Macquarie 1] eleven codex pages!). Thus linseed oil and pitch, Spanish oil and gum ammoniac, wine, wormwood, embalming salt, nails, potsherds, and slips of papyrus are all invested with the capacity to bear, direct, and hold the powers of that spoken incantation—reflecting the way Christian liturgy involved the materialization of sacramental incantations.[6]

Anthropomorphic images like the clay female figurine in the Louvre, punctured with nails,[7] (see Illustration 18-1) suggest that the manipulation of images could miniaturize a ritual cathartically—to allow a subject the experience of

1 *PGM* V.370–446.

2 *PGM* LXX.4–25.

3 *PGM* IV.2140–44.

4 *DTA* 107, in *CTBS*, 126–27. See Richard Gordon, "Showing the Gods the Way: Curse-Tablets as Deictic Persuasion," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1, no. 2 (2015): 153–57, 161–65.

5 Cf. *PGM* V.447–58.

6 Malcolm Choat and Iain Gardner, eds., *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power* (*P. Macq. I 1*), Macquarie Papyri 1 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2013). Compare *ACM* no. 127 = London Hay 10391.

7 Cf. *PGM* IV.296–405.

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gaining control over a fraught situation.[8] The image is treated as the victim or patient, or even as the desiring or vengeful instigator of a spell. The image gains material efficacy through, and for, the ritual process.[9]

All these concrete features of rites and spells reflect the central value of materiality in the mediation of religion and religious ideas. This new paradigm in the history of religions has shifted the conceptualization of religion itself. Where religion has often been imagined as a series of ideas and sentiments that occasionally (and unnecessarily) latch onto "idols" or "fetishes," now, with the recognition of the essential materiality of religion, we describe it in terms of how ideas, sentiments, and mythology are worked out through images, spaces, bodies, altars, animals, and so on.[10] These media are not simply the byproducts or artifacts "of" religion—as if religion could be understood separately from materials—but the materials that articulate and motivate religion.[11] The materiality of religion, properly conceived, should not be simply a renamed archaeology of religion but rather a broader, comparative perspective that focuses on material media as (a) primary contexts for (rather than peripheral artifacts of) religious and ritual *experience*, and (b) as possessing

8 Louvre figurine: see above, Eidinow, Chapter 15, and Wilburn, Chapter 18. On interpretations of this artifact see Pierre du Bourguet, "Ensemble magique de la période romaine en Égypte," *Revue du Louvre et des musées de France* 25 (1975): 255–57; *CTBS*, 97–100; John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, New Ancient World (New York: Routledge, 1990), 93–98; and Andrew T. Wilburn, *Materia Magica: The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 28–31. On catharsis as a function of binding ritual see below, Eidinow, Chapter 28.

9 In general on function of female figurines in late antique Egypt: David Frankfurter, "Female Figurines in Early Christian Egypt: Reconstructing Lost Practices and Meanings," *Material Religion* 11, no. 2 (2015): 190–223.

10 Useful manifestos and guides to the materiality of religion include Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); David Morgan, ed., *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (London: Routledge, 2010); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011); Birgit Meyer, "Mediation and the Genesis of Presence: Towards a Material Approach to Religion" (Utrecht: University of Utrecht, 2012); Birgit Meyer, "How to Capture the 'Wow': R.R. Marett's Notion of Awe and the Study of Religion," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22 (2016): 7–26. See also Wilburn, *Materia Magica*.

11 Compare Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremmer, eds., *The Materiality of Magic*, Morphomata 20 (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), whose essays (other than Richard Gordon, "From Substances to Texts: Three Materialities of 'Magic' in the Roman Imperial Period," in *The Materiality of Magic*, 133–76.) address the artifactual *materials* of magic rather than the intrinsic *materiality* of magic.

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and directing *agency* in the world—or at least in particular historical, social, or ritual contexts.[12]

The attention to the material object in the preponderance of ritual invocations and incantations does not mean that ritual specialists and clients imagined a "sympathetic" relationship between empowered or personalized object and the victim or subject of the spell, as James Frazer once proposed. Frazer's principle of sympathy proposed that if the sorcerer created something that resembled the victim he wanted to influence, or if it bore some concrete connection to the victim (like a piece of her hair), then whatever he might do to that surrogate, he (and his immediate culture) believed that would happen to the victim. This is the principle behind the modern western notion of the "voodoo doll" (about which more later): the pin that the sorcerer inserts in the part of the poppet's body is supposed to cause pain in the corresponding part of the victim's body. But this is not how ritual cursing or the ritual use of dolls has ever worked. The principle of sympathy is not a nuanced, context-specific approach to ritual action. Rather, as Frazer conceptualized it, sympathy was a primitive misunderstanding of the laws of physics. Thus, when modern scholars refer to "sympathetic magic," they shift the attention from the interpretation of ritual action to notions of physical causality.[13]

As we will see, there are many ways that ritual artifacts, figurines, and *defixiones* can function effectively and socially without presuming some primitive notions of sympathies. What we can observe more generally is the importance of materials and materiality in culminating or sealing rituals and the utility of material objects to focus attention, miniaturize, control, and in some cases gesture to "official" temple or church materials (symbols of a Great Tradition, like Christian sacraments or temple statuary).[14] Indeed, "magic" seems bound up with materiality in so many ways that it is worth querying the object, the thing, that so readily and vitally conveys ritual force. So the question in this essay is: can the special value of materiality in religious and ritual contexts be productively labelled magic or magical? Can magic be used to denote object-agency

12 David Frankfurter, "Ritual Matters: Afterword," in *Ritual Matters: Material Residues and Ancient Religions*, ed. Claudia Moser and Jennifer Wright Knust, Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 145–49. Cf. also Richard Gordon, "'Straightening the Paths': Inductive Divination, Materiality and Imagination in the Graeco-Roman Period," in *Ritual Matters*, 119–43.

13 See Stanley J. Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," in *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 60–86; Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 105–15.

14 See below, Frankfurter, Chapter 27.

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itself—the capacity of things (especially ritually prepared things to influence action and sentiments?

2 "Magic" and the Agencies in Nature

One way of recognizing a magic in materiality is to take account of ancient authors' perspectives on the world as a humming assortment of fixed sympathetic forces (not in the general protoscientific way that Frazer used magical "sympathy," but a more restricted and applied notion). Ancient medical authors offer a broad sampling of stones associated with hemorrhage, the powers of honey or vinegar over various ailments, diverse plants that cure not through chemical properties but through *concordia naturae ac repugnantia*, in Pliny's words.[15] Passed down as they were in ancient medical and natural history manuals, these traditions and declarations about natural sympathies were not folk remedies, nor did they amount to some kind of primitive, observational science. Rather, they amounted to a recognition on the authors' parts—and presumably most ancient peoples'—that sympathies and antipathies exist in nature, to be discovered and applied, and further, that the efficacy of these various powers—to heal or to repel symptoms—constituted a kind of agency active in things in the world: that stones, plants, and other substances could act on us.[16]

So, for example, in an important 2011 article Christopher Faraone argued that the inscribing of gemstones with images and writing was historically and artisanally secondary to the uses of the stones by themselves, as potent apotropaia or healing objects in themselves. Jasper, hematite, lapis lazuli—all these materials traditionally held powers, sympathies with body-parts and fluids, and were used in a variety of healing practices.[17] Thus the stones were no decorative backdrops or vehicles for the complex iconographies with which they were inscribed. Rather, the images, phrases, and signs that craftsmen carved into them served as interpretations of—even strategies to guide—the powers

15 Pliny, *Natural History*, 22.106.

16 See Patricia Gaillard-Seux, "Sur la distinction entre médecine et magie dans les textes médicaux antiques (I–V siècles)," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*, ed. Magali de Haro Sanchez (Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2015), 201–23. and further on Pliny and the properties of stones and plants, Gordon, "Straightening the Paths"; Gordon, "From Substances to Texts," 142–52.

17 See now above, Dasen and Nagy, Chapter 17.

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in the stones themselves.[18] This kind of material approach provokes us to take the medium of amulets more seriously.

Although the ancient authors present these natural sympathies and antipathies in restricted, erudite form, their observations of these forces point to a larger sensibility about the world as pulsating with various agencies: from the "natural" faculties of stones to the authority of celestial bodies, and even to the places and rocks that host spirits. This is an idea recently developed by exponents of a "new materialism": that we should reimagine our lives as subject in multiple ways to natural agencies rather than ourselves as dictators of nature (and prone simply to crude projections of our own intentionality onto things around us).[19] While these New Materialists note natural agency in microbes, electricity, advertising media, and so on, the ancient medical authors attend particularly to portable substances—stones, plants, liquids—that allow the compounding or assemblage of those natural agencies.

Thus to speak of a magic in the stone or amulet or prepared remedy is not simply to gloss an ancient author's notion of sympathy; rather, it is to recognize an ancient perspective on efficacies inherent in nature and natural substances: that things in nature have the capacity to act *on us*.

3 "Magic" and the Thing

Another context for the magic of objects is their regular shifts in cultural status—through performance, ritual, craft, exchange. In these shifts, neutral objects become subjects, *things*, set apart in our worlds and thus acquiring an agency in influencing and steering our behavior.[20] Sometimes we designate a thing, sometimes the thing thrusts itself into our awareness (like a strange stone or tree we come upon, or the dead chameleon, weirdly contorted, that the philosopher Libanius found in his lecture room); but in the end it becomes the actor in our experience, a subject rather than an object.[21] Ancient landscapes

18 Christopher Faraone, "Text, Image, and Medium: The Evolution of Graeco-Roman Magical Gemstones," in *"Gems of Heaven": Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity, AD 200–600*, ed. Chris Entwistle and Noel Adams (London: British Museum Press, 2011), 50–61.

19 See, e.g., Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

20 See esp. Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2001): 1–22; Bjornar Olsen, *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects* (Lanham, MD: Altamira, 2010); Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

21 Libanius, *Autobiography*, 249.

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were full of rocks, caves, statues, and other landforms that cried, moaned, and issued oracles—not as media for a god but as agents in themselves. In many ways the small, portable thing of magic was a microcosm of these pulsating landforms.[22]

Ritual traditions regularly involve, as we have seen, the assemblage of things, the designation of things, and the imbuing of things that will stand out from the material world and convey aggressive or beneficial agencies. A "favor or victory charm" described in a Roman-era spell collection from Egypt involves the following: "Take a blood-eating gecko that has been found among the tombs and grasp its right front foot and cut it off with a reed, allowing the gecko to return to its own hole alive. Fasten the foot of the creature to the fold of your garment and wear it."[23] Or, "take a completely black cat that died a violent death, make a strip of papyrus and write with myrrh the following (incantation), together with the one to whom you wish to send the dream, and place it into the mouth of the cat."[24] In both cases everyday fauna are reconceptualized as liminal and distinctive through their specific sites (among tombs) or manner of death (violent), and in that way they become powerful as amulets or ritual media.

These systematic combinations of strange or abhorrent materials with prosaic or domestic materials recall the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's observation of ritual language as involving a "coefficient of intelligibility" and a "coefficient of weirdness": that is, in the latter case, words that stand apart from the intelligible and that resist, even threaten coherence.[25] Here the object that one places in the fold of one's garment comes from a reptile dwelling among tombs. Like Libanius's chameleon, it is weird, out of place, an object challenging in its dissonance. It is the process of lifting the mundane gecko from its liminal habitat, and even amputating the foot in this precise way, that produces a potent thing, a subject with agency, a bringer of *charis*. In another example, we find a reference to a stillborn fetus [*brephos*] that a farmer and his henchmen used (according to a legal complaint in late second-century CE Karanis, Egypt) in order to "surround [a victim] with malice."[26] Again, this

22 See Michel Tardieu, "Nommer la matière," in *Noms barbares I: Formes et contextes d'une pratique magique*, ed. Michel Tardieu, Anna Van den Kerchove, and Michela Zago, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses 162 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 21–35.

23 *PGM* VII.186–90, trans. Hock, *GMPT*, 120.

24 *PGM* XII.107–9, trans. Grese, *GMPT*, 157 (emended).

25 Bronislaw Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1978), 2: 218–23.

26 P. Michigan VI.423–24. See David Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt," *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62; Wilburn, *Materia Magica*, 95–109.

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object on its own would be unremarkable waste; but lifted from its place (and wrapped somehow?) the dead fetus becomes a thing capable of terrorizing neighbors. The magic, then, might be said to lie in the meticulous designation of a thing that will convey agency in the world, as well as in the agency carried by that thing.

One interesting section of the bilingual Leiden magical papyrus J384 (*PGM* XII) comprises a list of relatively mundane ritual ingredients and the exotic names by which—so the ancient compiler asserts—the "temple scribes" referred to them: "Tears of a Hamadryas baboon: dill juice; … lion semen: human semen; Blood of Hephaistos: wormwood; Blood of Ares: purslane; … Kronos spice: piglet's milk; … semen of Ares: clover."[27] Renaming and redesignating an ingredient changes it from prosaic to unusual and even mythic in nature—a materiality from another world. The move is performative, as an outsider would merely recognize the stuff for what it is; but within the ritual context the redesignation of ingredients imbues the material substances themselves with strangeness—evocations (as the introductory section suggests) of priestly practices in ancient temples.[28]

The probability that these ingredients were rarely held up or used in isolation but rather in various combinations introduces another aspect of the magic of the thing: the *assemblage*. The construction of the "power-bundle" in African traditional religion has been the subject of extensive art-historical and anthropological discussion. These artifacts involve a specialist's careful selection of things weird—jawbones, skulls, blood—and more prosaic, like cowrie shells, twine, leather, and beads, to form a totality that resists representation: an animal or human form packed with ritual substances; a container practically bursting with bizarre objects; a wooden figure bound with twine and hung with innumerable cloth and leather strips, metal objects, and the thick remains of ritual substances.[29] The assemblage "works" through a combination of concealment (what lies within?) and emergence (what might come out?). The preparation of the assemblage is not so much the simple collection

27 *PGM* XII.414–40.

28 On this remarkable text see Lynn R. LiDonnici, "Beans, Fleawort, and the Blood of a Hamadryas Baboon: Recipe Ingredients in Greco-Roman Magical Materials," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Allan Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 359–77; Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual, 100–300 CE*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 185–203.

29 See Wyatt MacGaffey, "The Eyes of Understanding: Kongo Minkisis," in *Astonishment and Power* (Washington D.C.; London: National Museum of African Art, 1993), 20–103; Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983), 117–31.

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of things, as the *PGM* XII list above might imply, but rather the careful three-dimensional combination of types of objects associated with particular functions (perhaps divination or the performance of oaths), wrapped and bound to present concealment and emergence, and thus to create an even more striking material agent.

African examples show that the assemblage is very much the innovation and interpretation of a particular ritual specialist. And in this way it is an especially "artisanal" example of Lévi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage*: the selective and ad-hoc juxtaposition (by a specialist) of ostensibly random elements in more comprehensive form in order to express some tradition or truth.[30] But one glance at the power bundle or magical assemblage shows that it is the *material* elements, the things chosen, in juxtaposition and totality, that drive it—endow it with agency in the world. They are contained, even constrained with twine or string or in a bowl or carving; and yet they emerge in the world as extraordinarily potent agents.

While archaeologists of ancient religion are familiar with magical assemblages from excavations, often from domestic sites, the instructions in the so-called Greek Magical Papyri advise the preparation of diverse and elaborate material combinations, like those above using animal parts, and the following, for sending a particular dream into someone else's sleep:

> Make a hippopotamus of red wax, hollow, and put into the belly of this hippopotamus both gold and silver and the so-called *ballatha* of the Jews, and dress [*stolison*] it with white linen and put it in a pure window and, taking a sheet of hieratic papyrus, write on it with myrrh ink and baboon's blood whatever you wish to send (in a dream). Then, having rolled it into a wick and using it to light a new, pure lamp, put on the lamp the foot of the hippopotamus and say the Name, and it sends (the dream).[31]

This assemblage is colorful and prominently placed in a domestic context, but the hippopotamus form involves a more chaotic animal (the red wax indicating a "Sethian," or demonic, figure), conveying a potency outside that of the major gods.[32] In contrast, a death-spell in the Oslo magical papyrus involves a very different and more secretly-placed assemblage:

30 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1966), 16–22.

31 *PGM* XIII.309–19, trans. Smith, *GMPT*, 181, emended.

32 Maarten J. Raven, "Wax in Egyptian Magic and Symbolism," *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden* 64 (1983): 17–18, 25.

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> Take a lead *lamella* and inscribe with a bronze stylus the following names and the figure [depicted below on the papyrus], and after smearing it with blood from a bat, roll up the *lamella* in the usual fashion. Cut open a frog and put it into its stomach. After stitching it up with Anubian thread and a bronze needle, hang it up on a reed from your property by means of hairs from the tip of the tail of a black ox, at the east of your property near the rising of the sun.[33]

All that would be visible would be the dead frog, dripping blood from a reed some distance from the house. And yet, like the stillborn *brephos* that was probably wrapped in cloth before tossing at victims in second-century Karanis "to surround them with malice," local people probably knew what powers the assemblage was meant to wield and against whom.[34]

While it is difficult to imagine all these assemblages in their material prominence asserting their weird substances on *us* in time and space, it is important to consider their magic as a function of their materiality: particular objects "out of place" or resignified; substances amalgamated, juxtaposed, tied-up, inverted, secreted, tossed, or hung suggestively; the replacement of prosaic materials with more bizarre ingredients. It is not esoteric mythologies that endow these things with meaning (as scholars used to assert)[35] but their materiality—the ways they stand apart in the world and present a dangerous agency, whether imbued through the ritual or emergent from the very ingredients assembled. Binding figurines found at the spring of Anna Perenna in Rome were formed of diverse organic materials pressed around inscribed animal bones and placed in small containers of lead or terracotta.[36] A figure of Hermes to be used to provoke oracular dreams by one's bed is to be made, not of terracotta or bronze like those for sale at temple festivals, but from a dough of "28 leaves from a pithy laurel tree and some virgin earth and seed of wormwood, wheat meal and the herb calf's-snout … pounded together with … the liquid of an ibis egg," the whole thing put in a lime-wood shrine next to one's bed.[37] The North African author Apuleius's effort to commission a small wood figurine "to whom I could address my regular prayers" begins to look like the makings of sorcery

33 *PGM* XXXVI.231–41. trans. Hock, *GMPT*, 274–75.

34 See David Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic," 42–45.

35 Cf. Arthur Darby Nock, "The Lizard in Magic and Religion," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Zeph Stewart, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 1: 271–76.

36 Marina Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón, RGRW 168 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 204–6.

37 *PGM* V. 370–99.

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when the carver chooses the ambiguous Hermes as the model and gets—of all possible woods—ebony for the material.[38] To his accusers, Apuleius's black Hermes image seemed like the very god of sorcery. Thus images and figurines are likewise assemblages, depending for their agency and valence in the world on their very materials and the agencies latent in them.

4 The Materiality of the Figurine

When we consider the *materiality* of the figurine in relationship to magic, we are asking how the figurine comes to exert its own agency or to carry an agency endowed through a ritual process, but also how a figurine of whatever material ingredients impresses itself on *us*—what gestures and responses it impels in us. The last two examples of the iconic assemblage also illustrate the material aspects of the figurine.

In Andrew Wilburn's discussion of magical figurines above (Chapter 18) he makes the important observation that the process of forming an anthropomorphic (or other) medium for ritual purposes—binding, protection, erotic conquest, etc.—seeks not iconographic precision in the reproduction of the subject or victim but *congruencies*—that is, loci (arms, a head, a penis) or simply substance itself that allows ritual attention and effective gesture, rather than a miniaturization and condensation of the whole. The figurine might "be" the victim in the sense of a surrogate, providing a focal point for ritually binding that person (in the same way that another figurine might "be" the god Harpocrates in the sense of serving as a focal point for offerings); but the figurine is not in any way a complete and accurate reproduction of the victim (nor is the Harpocrates figurine a representation of the totality of the god).

The process by which a figurine becomes such a surrogate is itself a ritual transformation, involving incantations, declarative acts (see Frankfurter, above, Chapter 22), and the addition of substances. Rarely is there any intention of capturing the likeness of the subject or victim with accuracy. Neither the "wondrous spell for binding a lover" in the great Paris magical papyrus[39] nor the pierced figurine (now in the Louvre) made according to its instructions gives any indication of an effort to match the likeness of a particular person—nothing beyond "two figures, male and female.... the male as [*hōs*] Ares."[40] In this way

38 Apuleius, *Apology*, 61.

39 *PGM* IV.296–466.

40 *PGM* IV.298. Du Bourguet, "Ensemble magique"; Sophie Kambitsis, "Une nouvelle tablette magique d'Égypte," *BIFAO* 76 (1976): 213–33.

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the process of investing the figurine as surrogate for self, victim, or beloved is comparable to the procedures (that Wilburn also discusses, above, Chapter 18) whereby images are invested with identities as royal enemies, demonic forces, or divinities in ancient Egypt and Babylonia, consequently to be destroyed meticulously (in the case of enemies or demons) or to receive veneration (in the case of deities). In many cases the investment of a material surrogate with the identity of a particular victim involves the insertion of some kind of "stuff," perhaps from the victim. Thus the "wondrous spell for binding a lover" just mentioned instructs the attachment of some "*ousia* on the head or the neck."[41]

While investing the figurine with the identity of a surrogate depends on a ritual process, the actual form of the figurine is determined only by the need for efficacy. Thus, on the one hand, a fragment of a formulary in Milan (*PGM* CXXIV) instructs the preparation of a wax figurine (*andreian*), inside of which one inserts an inscribed papyrus and on the head of which one writes *omega* signs. Then one sticks bones into the eyes and head, and finally one puts it in a pot with water up to its shoulders, to be left in the dark.[42] (The actual purpose of this rite is unclear). The anthropomorphic form here is essential to the actions that address eyes, head, and shoulders; indeed, one might say the form governs the subsequent procedures in this rite. On the other hand, a spell to prevent one's wife from being "had [*schethēnai*]" by another man involves molding a crocodile from earth, ink, and myrrh, and putting it in a lead coffin on which one writes the secret name of Helios, the name of the wife, and the command, "Let NN not copulate with any other man except me, NN."[43] In this case the crocodile form is a miniature reference to the mummified form of the god Sobek—not in any way a dangerous or ambiguous image but one that could serve as a medium for transmitting a message to the divine world. So in one case the image used to bind the subject requires a human form, in another case a crocodile form. Efficacy is the goal of representation in both cases, not verisimilitude.

One component in the efficacy of the figurine is its *miniaturization*: of the human form in some cases or a divine image or animal avatar in others. The critic Susan Stewart has written helpfully about the various capacities of the miniature to allow idealization, intellectualization, control, and nostalgia.[44] For

41 *PGM* IV.303–4.

42 *PGM* CXXIV = *Suppl. Mag.*, no. 97

43 *PGM* XIII.320–26.

44 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1993), 37–69; Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 23–27. See also above, Wilburn, Chapter 18.

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example, the female figurines used in Egyptian votive ritual in late Roman times—as deposits to mediate supplicants' hopes at the shrine—condensed key aspects of the subject's own procreative capacity (belly, breasts, vulva) as well as beauty in self-presentation and receptiveness to the deity, through hairstyle and eye cosmetics. Through such miniaturized ideals the figurine was capable of mediating the personal investment and agency of the supplicant.[45] The figurines recommended in the magical papyri (and those discovered in ritual assemblages) idealize subjects differently: *reducing* the social ambiguity that would follow from verisimilitude and instead providing a medium in which to practice ritual actions. As imaginative and ritual objects the binding figurines also allow *control*: unlike real people, they stay in place yet are physically manipulable, constituted of pliable materials into which things can be inserted and letters inscribed. Yet the images of animals (as above, from *PGM* XIII) or gods[46] work differently, even in wax: they miniaturize temple cult and mythology and allow an idealized appropriation of the efficacy of cult traditions into the more personal sphere of the binding ritual.[47]

The miniature *calls for* a gestural response: placement in a shrine or a box or on a window; arrangement or insertion to incorporate a papyrus incantation; or manipulation to signify accompanying words. Miniaturization at a scale suitable to the hand involves certain gestural responses (sometimes in the crafting process itself); miniaturization suitable to one's arms involves other gestural responses. One of the hand-sized wax figurines from the Anna Perenna spring in Rome was augmented with a wax snake, posed with its open mouth over the human figure's head.[48] The Louvre figurine of the bound woman, reflecting instructions much like those in the erotic binding spell in the Paris papyrus (*PGM* IV.296–466), had pins inserted in her head, ears, mouth, belly, and vagina—that the intended love object might "remember"—in that part of her. A materiality of religion approach to such artifacts examines how the figurines, their form or materials, inspire or demand particular responses within the ceremony. Rather than imagining the figurine as a blank medium and responsive action dictated entirely by the instructions of some text, we ask how the ritualist or client is drawn toward particular gestures or responses. We

45 Frankfurter, "Female Figurines in Early Christian Egypt," 205–10. Cf. David Frankfurter, "Terracotta Figurines and Popular Religion in Late Antique Egypt: Issues of Continuity and 'Survival,'" in *Le Myrte et la rose. Mélanges offerts à Françoise Dunand*, ed. G. Tallet and Chr. Zivie-Coche (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier III, 2014), 129–41.

46 E.g., *PGM* IV.3125–71; V.370–99.

47 On the miniaturization of cult action see Smith, "Trading Places"; David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 138–42.

48 Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna," 207–8.

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attribute agency to the figurine, responses to its user. A votive figurine "asks" to be touched a certain way, then deposited at some particular place at a shrine; a domestic figurine "asks" to be placed in a particular site in the house at a particular time, faced a particular way; likewise, the Louvre figurine has no other purpose—no other "request"—than to receive the pins that mark the hopes and ambition of the ritual subject and to be deposited with the appropriate messenger (a corpse *biaiothanatos*). Addressing the "affective postures" by which people in Mesoamerica hold and cradle (arm-scale) Catholic images, Jennifer Hughes has shown how these embodied responses extend to a range of interpretations, whereby the divine image becomes one's child and cradling itself invites particular emotions towards an image.[49] So also handling, piercing, and flattening images call upon such archives of feeling—pleasure, anger, hope—in response to the image.[50]

Figurines, of course, can undergo transformation through ritual gesture. As a sacred image can be dismembered or crushed in an act of purifying iconoclasm, so a wax image in a binding rite can be flattened or melted, a clay image can be twisted or flattened, a lead image can be sunk in a well. These transformations follow from the very nature of the materials: lead, wax, clay, and so on.[51] In some ritual instructions or accompanying curse-tablets these material transformations are highlighted or implied in the treatment of the image—or the animals accompanying a binding tablet: "Just as this rooster has been bound by its feet, hands, and head, so bind the legs and hands and head and heart of Victoricus the charioteer … and the horses"; "just as this puppy is (turned) on its back and is unable to rise, so neither (may the people named below)."[52] Faraone has traced this kind of *similia similibus* formula to two ancient Near Eastern practices: destroying demons by means of wax figurines ("as this image melts, so the witch causing this plague will melt"), and ceremonializing oaths through animal sacrifices whose actions are then threatened against any oath-breaker ("as this calf's head is cut off, so it will happen to anyone who breaks this oath!").[53] As such formulae came historically to be retooled

49 Jennifer Scheper Hughes, "Cradling the Sacred: Image, Ritual, and Affect in Mexican and Mesoamerican Material Religion," *History of Religions* 56, no. 1 (2016): 55–107.

50 For further examples see Christopher A. Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of 'Voodoo Dolls' in Ancient Greece," *Classical Antiquity* 10, no. 2 (1991): 165–220. (notwithstanding his unfortunate use of "voodoo doll" as a descriptive category).

51 See Raven, "Wax in Egyptian Magic and Symbolism," 28–30.

52 *CTBS* 65–67 (no. 12), 143–44 (no. 53).

53 Christopher Faraone, "Molten Wax, Spilt Wine and Mutilated Animals: Sympathetic Magic in Near Eastern and Early Greek Oath Ceremonies," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113 (1993): 60–80; Christopher Faraone, "Clay Hardens and Wax Melts: Magical Role-Reversal

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for private binding spells and their accompanying images—so the argument goes—the *similia similibus* formula shifted conceptually from grotesque threat (in the case of oaths) or ritual control of danger (in the case of melting wax figurines) to *sympathetic magic*: the idea that aggressive acts performed on the surrogate (figurine or animal) are believed to do the same to the victim.

As mentioned earlier, we must be extraordinarily careful with the concept of sympathetic magic, which follows not from careful ethnographic description of ritual practices and artifacts but from Frazer's *Golden Bough* and its view of magic as a type of primitive misconception of the world.[54] While we are prone culturally to imagine that ritual figurines functioned like the stereotypical "voodoo doll"—itself a nineteenth-century notion that projected English poppet traditions onto African culture[55]—in fact the acts and gestures of aggression and binding on figurines in ancient religion had quite different functions than the infliction of specific harms.[56] The Louvre figurine, bound and punctured, is the case in point: the pins serve not to inflict pain in these body parts but "remembrance,"[57] and the bound posture does not depict how the client wants to have his beloved's body but rather to signify her subjection to a figurine of Ares. Beyond that, the ritual seeks to bind her will to him and even to externalize his own lovesick suffering.[58] The wax image of the person assaulted by a serpent, from the Anna Perenna spring, clearly did not seek the very same monstrous experience for the victim; rather, the dramatic assemblage compounded the theatricality of the binding.

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in Vergil's Eighth Eclogue," *Classical Philology* 84, no. 4 (1989): 294–300. In biblical legend this kind of oath emerges in 1 Sam 11:7 and its hideous parody in Judges 19:22–30.

54 See esp. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 145–46, 205–15. See also Wilburn in Chapter 18, above.

55 See esp. Natalie Armitage, "European and African Figural Ritual Magic: The Beginnings of the Voodoo Doll Myth," in *The Materiality of Magic: An Artefactual Investigation into Ritual Practices and Popular Beliefs*, ed. Ceri Houlbrook and Natalie Armitage (Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2015), 85–102; M. Chris Manning, "Material Culture of Ritual Concealments in the United States," *Historical Archaeology* 48, no. 3 (2014): 70.

56 This unfortunate term, imputing an invented European notion of harming foes to Haitian religious tradition, was introduced into the lexicon of ancient religions most prominently by Chris Faraone: Faraone, "Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil: The Defensive Use of 'Voodoo Dolls' in Ancient Greece," 166n. 4; Christopher Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 25n. 31; see also Daniel Ogden, *Greek and Roman Necromancy* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), xxix, 3, 106.

57 *PGM* IV.327–28.

58 Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, 93–98.

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Likewise, in other cases of aggressive ritual uses of figurines (in archaeology or text), we must regard the ritual action as its own totality, as functional in the performance and deposit itself, *independent* of rational expectations for specific results. That totality encompasses (a) the preparation of the figurine from set ingredients (or its procurement from a craftsman), (b) the client's or ritualist's attention—indeed, response—to iconic form and materiality, and (c) the sequences of action, incantation, and finally deposit in a fixed place like a grave or spring. Within this totality of a ritual world—whether for binding or for votive deposit or for apotropaic protection—the figurine acquires a presence, an agency, that invites a range of gestural responses. And even for binding the responses were not uniformly aggressive: one assemblage from fifth-century CE Assiut, Egypt, included two wax images posed in an erotic embrace.[59]

But while I have been focusing on the *material* presence of the figurine as the source of agency, in many cases the figurine—as a material thing—is meant to mediate someone or something else's agency. In his essay (above, Chapter 18), Wilburn discusses ways that ritual specialists imbue figurines with their own "extended" agency. Votive female figurines in Roman and Christian Egypt likewise acquire the agency of a supplicant through the protracted process of acquisition (in some cases involving a choice from a number of models), touching and carrying, comparing, and emotionally investing the figurine with the capacity to transmit one's hopes.[60] Likewise figurines meant to represent gods or ancestors are ritually endowed with the presence of the deity, such that it henceforth has the potential to represent the deity in the context of devotional practices. In the next section I address in general this material mediation of social agency in ritual.

5 "Magic," Materiality, and the Distribution of Social Agency

Magic, so Malinowski observed among the Trobriand islanders, always has a pedigree, a mythic lineage that established the charm, gesture, object, or assemblage *in the beginning* as timelessly efficacious. The charm used in the here-and-now indexes an archetype that was first revealed to a culture hero or uttered by a god in the beginning of time; and its efficacy in this world,

59 See *Suppl. Mag.* no. 45 and *CTBS* 101–3, no. 30. On the range of figurines from western sites cf. Magali Bailliot, "Roman Magic Figurines from the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire: An Archaeological Survey," *Britannia* 46 (2015): 93–110.

60 Frankfurter, "Female Figurines in Early Christian Egypt," 204.

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through the work of a ritual specialist, repeats—often via explicit recitation—the original act.[61] But where Malinowski focused on the social value of the myth in sanctioning ritual powers in general, we might ask how this notion of the pedigree or mythic lineage might be a *feature* of the material object, the ritual thing. How can the magical object convey lineage, a sense of *social* context or recognizability, and how does that lineage itself create a kind of agency in the object?

Many ritual manuals instruct the preparation of some assemblage or compound of substances, to be wielded or applied to the body in conjunction with an incantation that mythically revalues that assemblage: from the work of the ritual specialist to the work or substance of a god. By these means the materiality of the compound or assemblage carries the agency of the god.[62] For example, an Egyptian healing spell from a British Museum papyrus instructs the preparation of a poultice of acacia resin, barley dough, cooked carob beans, colocynths, and cooked feces, "to be made into one mass. To be mixed with the milk of a woman who has given birth to a male child. To be applied to the burn, so that it will be healed." The incantation associated with this compound retells a story of the child Horus, away from his mother Isis, falling into a fire, and the laments of the goddess, his mother, on finding him: "Show me my way that I may do what I know (to do), that I may extinguish [the burning] for him with my milk, with the salutary liquids from between my breasts. It will be applied to your body … I will make the fire recede that has attacked you!"[63] If we take seriously the materiality of the healing compound, its central function in mediating both myth and immediate ritual efficacy, then we see that the force of that compound comes from Isis herself. It is the milk of her breasts, that she offers of her own desperation. The material compound thus transmits *Isis's* agency, will and capacity to act. It is not simply the mythic transvaluation of a ritual substance but the establishment of that substance's agency in this world as the goddess's own.

Declarations that a material substance or object is not a mundane instrument but that of a god are common features in Egyptian, Greek, and other recipes for healing, cursing, and gaining favors. All such declarations instill materiality with an agency greater than it might have outside the ritual context. We earlier saw the "translations of priestly ingredients" in *PGM* XII, in which

61 Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1954), 74–76, 83–84, 141–43.

62 See above, Frankfurter, Chapter 22, on the force of illocutionary utterances.

63 British Museum Papyri = P. B.M. 10059, no. 46, trans. J.F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, Nisaba 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), no. 34.

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"blood of Ares" is merely purslane, "semen of Hermes" merely dill, "blood of Hestia," simply chamomile, and so on.[64] As discussed above, this text reflects larger issues in the representation of Egyptian religion and its Greek interpretations; but it also addresses the agencies purported to lie in ingredients brought together for ritual assemblage, such that separately or in assemblage they can work as more than prosaic substances.

Thus the ritual declarations or indications that a substance, object, or assemblage conveys and will act through the agency of a god lift those materials from the prosaic or mechanical to the "magical"—things that are more than they seem, more than their ingredients, or more than they would be beyond their ritual infusion. But the agency of objects can have a more subtle, social basis as well. Any lineage or pedigree situates the assemblage, object, or incantation in a social context, integrating the thing (in all its weirdness or liminality) with the intimacy of social interaction and social imagination. In this way objects become subjects. The anthropologist Alfred Gell detailed the ways that things in our world acquire and convey an identity and agency derived from an original owner, craftsman, or giver, or even their embeddedness in our lives—as extensions of our social experience.[65] A wristwatch, a doll, a car, a shirt, or a picture may appear to have neutral value until something disrupts its status ("We can't throw this away! Aunt Margaret gave it to us!" or "I can't donate this shirt to Goodwill; I got it for our honeymoon" or "my car needs a tune-up; I have rearranged my day so I can get an appointment with the one mechanic who understands her"). At that point it becomes more than a neutral object; it becomes an *agentic subject*, a "thing."

Gell's argument, however, goes beyond the mere shift in materiality to object-agency, for the agency is always, ultimately, a reification of social forces: the thing as a player in our lives, a companion, a needy friend (as many people regard their cars), a hostile force (in the case of a disease). In this way the magic of things points back ultimately to the individual actors and performative and social contexts through which objects become things—a feature typically lost in the documents for ancient magic.[66]

64 PGM XII.401–44.

65 Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

66 Cf. Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3–63.

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6 Conclusion

A magical object can thus refer to any material thing that acts in the world as a subject—that carries agency—whether a mass-produced amulet, a material "blessing" from a holy man, an assemblage created as part of a binding ritual, a compound prepared by a local healer, or some other material transformed through ritual, exchange, or selection. The process of creating a magical object is manifold, involving a ritual expert's verbal rites or creative assemblages or simply some situation in which an object is set apart in the world as a thing—e.g., the capturing of a lizard (or a still-born fetus) to function as the efficacious, material vehicle of a spell.

By referring to a "magic" in the material, however, we must be careful not to assume a temporary or tentative charge separate from the material itself. The nature of the magical object (and the basis for describing its agency) is that its potency, its capability to act and impel, lies in the material itself—the amulet or assemblage—and its appearance, its tactile features, and its smell. Even if its agency derives ultimately from a god, hero, ancestor, or ritual expert, the amulet, blessing, or assemblage bears that agency in its *material* form. This is the concept of "object agency." And as controversial as this concept might be to those who might insist objects cannot possibly have agency in themselves, this concept is fundamental to any practices, artifacts, or lore we might associate with the category magic.

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CHAPTER 25

The Magical Elements of Mysticism: Ritual Strategies for Encountering Divinity

Naomi Janowitz

Magic and mysticism are usually defined as only distant cousins. Magic is associated with fraud, unconstrained by social niceties and without any lofty goals. The magician engages in harmful actions that involve elaborate, highly irrational techniques.[1] In contrast, mysticism is usually defined as a personal encounter with divinity, a privileged religious experience that transforms the individual.[2] This personal communion with a deity is achieved using mental techniques and not forced by complex manipulation of objects.

Despite these (imputed) differences, the ancient evidence does not fall neatly into these two categories. Classically defined mystical rites may be said to include techniques that could be called "magical." Isolating magical elements can be a circular exploit, determined by the definition of "magic."[3] In contrast, the recent explosion of interest in performativity refines notions of magical language. Instead of a misguided general belief that words can "force" actions, J.L. Austin and John Searle formulated a much more specific notion of the "force" of speech acts.[4] Reference and predication are no longer considered to be the primary functions of language, with tremendous implications for definitions of both mysticism and magic.

1 Despite extensive critiques, this view is still popular. See now, in contrast, the chapters in Part 3: The Materials of Magic.

2 Important theoretical discussions of mysticism include S. Katz, "On Mysticism," *JAAR* 56, no. 4 (1988): 751–57; W. Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), M. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994).

3 For a comparison that employs traditional definitions of ancient Jewish magic and mysticism, see G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 322–39. Bohak correctly observes that mystical and magical techniques overlap in Jewish texts (325). *Sefer Yetsira*, for example, includes both philosophical and pragmatic (context-related) speculation about letters and thus is paradigmatic of both mysticism and magic.

4 See also Frankfurter, Chapter 22, above.

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The first task is to review ancient ideas about language, that is, ancient linguistic (or semiotic) ideologies.[5] Speakers endow language with all sorts of powers, in both written and oral forms. The examples below demonstrate a range of ideas about language, including how language was thought to represent reality.

The second task is to analyze these ideologies of language, since they are always based on only partial awareness of how language works. In the broadest terms, the multi-functionality of words cannot be explained by the common but incorrect idea that they primarily refer and predicate. Language includes functions both semantic (i.e., focused on the meanings of words) and pragmatic (i.e., effecting the contexts of use).[6]

Analyzing these functions is necessary because of the inherent limitations to speakers' ideas about how language employs power and investigates truth. Each linguistic ideology is "a conceptual product of the linguistic conditions on which it rests."[7] That is, speakers draw ideas about how language works from those aspects of language that stand out the most to them, such as the seeming importance of first-person verbs in making words "do things," which Austin placed at the center of his theory.[8] Not surprisingly, many dimensions of using language remain opaque to the user, including those context-related dimensions of language and structures that are less obvious. The contextual mooring (dependence on context and creation of context) of words and other signs offers new ways of conceptualizing and classifying rituals in general.[9]

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5 For a general introduction to linguistic ideologies see M. Silverstein, "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology," in *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, ed. P. Clyne, W. Hanks, and C. Hofhaur, (Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1978), 193–247; for semiotic ideologies see W. Keane, "Social Analysis of Material Things," *Language and Communications* 23 (2003): 409–25. See also the recent discussion in M. Lambek, "Word as Act: Varieties of Semiotic Ideology in the Interpretation of Religion." In *Words: Religious Language Matters*, ed. E. v. d. Hemel and A. Szafraniec, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 17–34.

6 For terminology and analysis see R. Parmentier, *Signs in Society: Studies in Semiotic Anthropology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), Parmentier, "The Pragmatic Semiotics of Cultures," *Semiotica* 116 (1997): 1–115, B. Lee, *Talking Heads: Language, Metalanguage, and the Semiotics of Subjectivity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997) and M. Silverstein, "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function," in *Reflexive Language: Reprted Speech and Metapragmatics*, ed. J. Lucy (Cambridge: Cambrdige University Press, 1993), 33–58.

7 M. Silverstein, "Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality," in *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identity*, ed. Paul Kroskrity (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 2000), 86. Thus speakers unwittingly think that some aspects of their language are direct representations of reality. See also Lee, *Talking Heads*, chapters 6 and 7.

8 For an extensive critique of Austin see Lee, *Talking Heads*, chapters 1 and 2.

9 For contextual relations in rituals see Parmentier, *Signs in Society*, 96, 122, 125–55.

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As with magic, in the case of mysticism it is hard to escape a certain circularity.[10] Jewish mystical rites, for example, such as those in the Hekhalot texts, are often defined as experiences of ascent to and through the heavenly realms resulting in the transformation of the one ascending.[11] Consequently, we might surmise that mystical rites had more importance in the late antique "utopian" worldview—using the categories of J.Z. Smith—than in the "locative" worldview of earlier biblical cultures.[12] On the other hand, we might turn to the work of Michael Sells, who draws upon the late third-century CE author Plotinus to define mysticism as a particular linguistic ideology, an "unsaying" that leads to a mental, and moral, state of being.[13] This essay will use as examples both Jewish Hekhalot texts and the works of Plotinus, as well as earlier texts and some that push the boundaries of what we call mysticism. Investigating the magical aspects of mysticism through these diverse ancient texts allows us to locate ancient ideologies of language, to further analyze these ideologies, and in the process to outline some of the ways that these ideologies problematically continue to influence modern analytic categories.

1 Example A: Words as Representations of Divinity

The Derveni Papyrus, a third-century BCE papyrus found in Greece, preserves in fragmentary form fifth-century BCE instructions for carrying out sacrifices and allegorical interpretations of a poem attributed to Orpheus.[14] In this papyrus, *mystai*, often translated as "initiates," appears alongside *magoi*, a term often simply transliterated to avoid having to choose either "magicians" or "priests."[15]

10 For example, on the claim that mystical experiences are beyond words, Proudfoot notes, "Ineffability is not a simple unanalyzable characteristic of the experience, as [William] James implies, but … an artifact of the peculiar grammatical rules that govern the use of certain terms in the religious context" (*Religious Experience*, 125). Thus the term *mysticism* carries with it truth implications, as does the term *miracle* (*Religious Experience*, 145).

11 Eliot Wolfson critiques Bilhah Nitzan's characterization of some Dead Sea Scrolls as mystical since they lack specific references to (1) enthronement and (2) transformation of the individual (E. Wolfson, "Mysticism and the Poetic-Liturgical Compositions from Qumran: A Response to Bilhah Nitzan," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 85 (1994): 185–202). But Wolfson backtracks, noting that some of the scrolls may in fact depict transformation. He also offers no theoretical explanation as to why mysticism must be defined according to the specific image of enthronement found in the Hekhalot texts he champions.

12 J.Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).

13 Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*.

14 For a translation and introduction see A. Laks and G.W. Most, eds., *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

15 See Graf, Chapter 7, above.

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These two types of ritual experts are presented in parallel: "The *mystai* make a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way the *magoi* do."[16]

The author complains that "*mystai*/initiates" undergo initiations without understanding the meaning of the rite.[17] Only some initiates qualify as superior ritual experts in that they understand the true meanings of the sacred texts. Crucially, they are experts at language processes that guide correct interpretation (philology, allegory, etc.). These interpretations are vital since Orpheus spoke "holy discourse" and that discourse is "riddles."[18] Given the nature of holy texts, only correct interpretation leads to the truth.

The author of the Derveni Papyrus had a rich toolbox of techniques that included sacrifices and word investigations. Interpreting riddles trumped sacrifices to the extent that special language forms such as allegory and etymology give better access to divinity. The *mystai* investigated words based on a particular ideology of reality as an extension of language: words represent reality in hidden but accessible ways. The person who knows the hidden meaning has an advantage over the one who just reads the text or acts. Presumably, correct interpretation governs the meaning of nonverbal forms of action such as sacrifice as well.[19]

A tight connection between words and reality appears in many ancient linguistic ideologies where words are thought to naturally, and not conventionally, represent what they name. In Socrates' search for the truth, names (words) are formal representations of divinity and thus central to both philosophical investigation and ritual practice.[20] As he is presented in Plato's *Cratylus*, Socrates rejects Hermogenes' idea that names are conventional, arguing instead that they refer in a natural and nonconventional manner.[21] Names are the best available descriptors of divinity because they are not arbitrary.

16 F. Ferrari, "Rites without Frontiers: Magi and Mystae in the Derveni Papyri," *ZPE* 179 (2011): 77.

17 Laks and Most, *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*, Col VI; see R. Janko, "The Physicist as Hierophant: Aristophanes, Socrates and the Authorship of the Derveni Papyrus," *ZPE* 118 (1997): 67.

18 Laks and Most, *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*, Col VII.

19 As Janko notes, some of this (re)interpretation may entail the rejection or modification of traditional religious rites (Janko, "Physicist as Hierophant," 77).

20 In terms of reference, no distinction is made between nouns and names, so all nouns, as names, have a special relationship with what they represent. See R. Barney, "Plato on Coventionalism," *Phronesis* 42 (1997): 143.

21 D. Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148. See also Barney, "Plato on Coventionalism"; I. Smith, "Taking the Tool Analogy Seriously: Forms and Naming in the Cratylus," *Cambridge Classical Journal* 60 (2014): 75–99.

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David Sedley summarizes this linguistic ideology as "a thing's name [being] its verbal portrait, in the sense that it is in virtue not just of its having been assigned to that thing but also of its mimetic description of it that the word secures its status as that thing's name."[22] Given that names are not entirely conventional, it is possible to mine them for the truth, using techniques such as etymology, definition and dialectical explorations. This ideology extends even to adjectives.[23] It also filters upward to larger linguistic units. Myths, for example, demand allegorical interpretation.

At the same time, reference has its limitations, since even a true name is not the same as what it names. Names are in part conventional. The gap between name and object increases when what is named becomes more significant. In other words, the greater the importance of the object, the more problematic the name will be. For instance, names are incapable of fully representing the highest Platonic Forms.[24]

This ideology clarifies what words can and cannot do: that is, how they function as techniques just like other techniques in rituals. Words cannot fully represent their objects, even as they stand for them in a natural, as opposed to conventional, way. But words still trump other techniques for pursuing truth and divinity since other signs may have even less of a natural connection with divinity. Since this use of words has been investigated and rationalized in detail, it is not likely to be described as magical. Many ancient texts contrast word-based investigations (sometimes labeled philosophy) with object-based techniques, which often have not been integrated into an explicit semiotic ideology.[25] Modern scholars repeat some of these ancient classifications, privileging "mystical" over "magical" modes of representation as being more reasonable or sensible. However, from a theoretical point of view, to the extent that "magical" often means nonconventional modes of representation that are formally connected with what they represent, the ancient Greek *mystai* could be said to have depended on "magical" connections between words and reality.

Before turning to the next example it is worth noting that Socrates was a consummate conversationalist and left behind no writings.[26] Plato repeated

22 Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, 149. See in particular *Cratylus* 386d–390e and 391b–427d.

23 Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, 4.

24 Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, 5.

25 See the extended discussion in J.Z. Smith, "Great Scott! Thought and Action One More Time," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 73–91.

26 Socrates privileged oral discourse over written texts, demonstrating a "passionate, one might say obsessive, devotion to talk, to conversation, to argument" (A. Nehamas, "Voices of Silence: On Gregory Vlastos' Socrates," *Arion* 2, no. 1 [1992]: 158).

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Socratic suspicions about writing in the *Phaedrus*. Written linguistic forms may have been more likely to be labeled as magical. This inclination is despite the displacement of Socrates' spoken words by Plato's own texts.[27] It is possible to be suspicious of Socrates' sophistry and prefer written texts, just as the *mystai* both interpreted and produced texts.

2 Example B: Words as Divine Speech

Even when it is petitionary, liturgy is usually considered a polite form of request to a deity and not magical language.[28] In our next example, reciting hymns embeds a human in the heavenly chorus. The recitation of hymns as a technique for ascent and divine communion was first recognized by Morton Smith in the case of the Hekhalot hymns, long before Carol Newsom found a similar method in *The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (*Songs*) from Qumran.[29] The *Songs* is an ascent liturgy, that is, a set of prayers structured as a tour of increasingly holy sections of the heavenly world.[30] Specifically, the hymns present intricate descriptions of angelic praise, detailing the heavenly Temple and its structure, with its seven priesthoods, seven chief priests, etc. The speaker participates in the liturgy and thereby becomes part of the heavenly chorus.[31]

27 H. Berger, "Facing Sophists: Socrates' Charismatic Bondage in Protagoras," *Representations* 5 (1984): 61–99.

28 For a classic introduction to degrees of politeness in requests see Ervin-Tripp, "Is Sybil There? The Structure of American English Directives," *Language in Society* 5 (1976): 25–66.

29 Smith was not interested in the question of the ritual efficacy of the hymns (M. Smith, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati," in *Biblical and Others Studies*, ed. A. Altmann [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963], 142–60). While Newsom outlines the use of hymns in the ascent process in great detail, she does not explain the linguistic function of the liturgy (C. Newsom, "'He Has Established Himself Priests': Human and Angelic Priesthood in the Qumran Shabbath Shirot," in *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence Schiffman [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990], 101–20; Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985]). See also G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960).

30 The text comprises thirteen hymns structured as two sets of six with a central, most important, seventh hymn the climax of the ascent (Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*).

31 This use of priestly imagery does necessitate a direct linkage with priestly circles. The vocabulary in the *Songs* does not link directly with priestly sources but draws instead on a range of biblical texts (N. Mizrachi, "The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Biblical Priestly Literature: A Linguistic Reconsideration," *HTR* 104 (2011): 57; see also Mizrachi, "Aspects of Poetic Stylization in Second Temple Hebrew: A Linguistic Comparison of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Ancient Piyyut," in *Hebrew in the Second Temple Period:*

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In the *Songs*, liturgical acts of praise are constructed out of descriptions of praise. That is, descriptions of the heavenly Temple, its cult, and the heavenly beings engaged in the cult become the content of liturgy. It is as if someone asked: What does it mean to praise? The answer given is: To describe heavenly praise. As far as we know from the text, the rite was words-only, consisting entirely of these descriptions of praise and including no other types of actions or objects.

The liturgy in this example is a special kind of "talk" that transforms the speaker as part of a trip through the heavens. As noted by Smith and echoed by Newsom, to the extent that service before God is "up there," human recitation of angelic liturgy indicates that humans are "up there" as well. This transformation depends on, first, a distinct ideology of divine speech and, second, the embedding of this ideology by means of reported speech into the poetic structure of the rite that is a replication of the levels of heaven. Together these dimensions of the rite combine to create the context of an ascent that has already taken place.[32]

As to the first point, the core linguistic ideology is a creative reworking of biblical models of divine speech, and in particular of curses and blessings. Blessings and curses function on earth as divine speech—that is, as automatically effective. These words operate independently of the will of the speaker and cannot be taken back once spoken. The automatic efficacy of blessings means that they do not lose their power when they are presented as reported speech. Every time they are spoken it is as if the deity is the one speaking, even if the words come out of the mouth of an earthly representative.[33] The conveyer of blessings and curses does not even need to understand what he is saying, as in the case of Balaam's donkey, which responded to the presence

The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and of Other Contemporary Sources, ed. S. Fassberg, M. Bar-Asher, and R. Clements [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013], 147–63.).

32 On the creation of a context that is presumed by the rite see E. LiPuma and B. Lee, "Performativity of Ritual Exchange: A Melanesian Example," in *Exchange and Sacrifice*, ed. J. Stewart and A. Strathern (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), 95–137; M. Silverstein, "The Semiotic Varieties of Religious Experience," forthcoming.

33 On biblical blessing forms see C.W. Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK "To Bless" in the Old Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987). For theoretical discussions see D. Frankfurter, "Curses, Blessings, and Ritual Authority: Egyptian Magic in Comparative Perspective," *JANER* 5 (2005): 157–85; M.D. Swartz, "Aesthetics of Blessing and Cursing: Literary and Iconographic Dimensions of Hebrew and Aramaic Blessing and Curse Texts," *JANER* 5, no. 1 (2005): 187–211.

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of the angel of YHWH in the road without the understanding or direction of Balaam himself (Numbers 22:21–39).[34]

The same is true for the liturgy spoken as part of the ascent rituals. The device of quoted speech, or in this case quoted divine praise, shifts the praise by the heavenly speaker into the mouth of a human.[35] The role of divine speech has shifted for both the deity and his representative who utters it. Not only does divine speech convey blessings and curses, but, as seen in this and the next example, uttering divine speech has an effect on the speaker.

Second, each act of self-reflective praise is calibrated to a particular place in the heavens. Reciting that praise is evidence that the speaker occupies that level: the recitation of each specific praise formula indexes the reciter as having arrived at the heavenly location appropriate for the recitation (exploiting the link between the levels of praises and the levels of heaven).

Thus in the *Songs*, efficacious speech still belongs to divine speakers, including angels and the angelic chorus. But now the human speaker fuses with the heavenly praise speakers since it is impossible to speak liturgy X at level X without being part of the heavenly chorus at that level. Just as in our first example, "magical" language is central to the mystical goals of contact with divinity and personal transformation. In this case they are synonymous.

That humans can speak like divine beings reflects a shifting of concepts of what it means to be human. The ritual goal of deification emerged in the period of the Dead Sea Scrolls.[36] While a variety of rites focused on this goal, ascent rites depended on the common social understanding that only certain types of beings could successfully recite certain formulas. While the use of other types of signs (clothing, music, etc.) also functioned to help people cross over the boundary between human and divine, language use was privileged here, as in the case of the *mystai*.

34 Mitchell notes the need for either God or a representative of God to be the speaker for the utterance to be automatic (Mitchell, *Meaning of brk "To Bless,"* 7–8, 174).

35 For a different model of shifting divine speech also found at Qumran, see the prayer in 1QSbs that extends and redirects the priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24–26 to bless the priest himself.

36 Divinization became a goal of a wide array of rites, including ascent. See M. Smith, *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 110–43, followed by, among others, Wolfson, "Poetic-Liturgical Compositions from Qumran," and C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002).

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3 Example C: Transformation by Divine Names and Their Sounds

A linguistic ideology of divine names, our third example, is found in a particularly rich set of rabbinic texts where the divine name is the main creative and ordering force of the cosmos.[37] In this ideology, God's name, already in biblical texts an opportunity to spin out theological doctrine, became even more significant in rabbinic texts. Evidence of this shift is the naming of a divine name as *Shem Ha-Meforash* (The Preeminent Name).[38] This is a shorthand reference to the divine name both as it refers to the deity and as it is an instrument of creative power. A name is the word that most closely "stands for" what it names—in this case, the deity. This name is the especially secret and powerful name of God, which is surrounded by taboos.

The specific linguistic function of names in general can help explain the special function of the powerful divine name and of angel names that include it. Every personal name is first fixed as referring to a specific person in what the linguist S. Kripke has called a "baptismal" event of naming.[39] The naming event subsequently causes reference to become "rigid," meaning that personal names cannot be casually employed without referring to the named individual and invoking any social implications of the name.[40] In view of the difficulty of decontextualizing names, they become the focus of numerous taboos.[41] The power of a name is proportional to the taboos associated with that name.

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37 N. Janowitz, "Re-creating Genesis: The Metapragmatics of Divine Speech," in *Reflexive Language*, ed. J. Lucy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 393–405.

38 This name is difficult to translate and date, as seen already in W. Bacher, "Shem Ha-Meforash," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia,* ed. Isidore Singer, vol. 11 (New York; London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1905), 262–64. Components of the ideology (secrecy, automatic power, taboos) appear in non-rabbinic texts, while the rabbis seem to have contributed the specific phrasing of the new Name-for-the-Name.

39 S. Kripke, "Naming and Necessity," in *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. D. Davidson & G. Harman, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1972), 4. As an "inherently inferring noun-phrase type," a personal name (whether one word or several) refers uniquely and irrevocably to the person named even as it stands symbolically for that person (L. Fleming, "Name Taboos and Rigid Performativity," *Anthropological Quarterly* 84 [2011]: 146. See also Lee, *Talking Heads*, 90.

40 Fleming, "Name Taboos." Citation, for example, cannot diffuse contextual implications. It is hard to talk "about" a name without seeming to "use" it. This rigid reference also explains why divine names more readily raise issues of re-contextualization (borrowing) than equally diffused elements, a point that has implications for discussions such as R. Boustan and J. Sanzo, "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity," *HTR* 110 (2017): 217–40.

41 The taboos carefully delineate the social permission needed to refer to an individual and the ways in which names cannot be used in both oral and written form.

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Divine names, not surprisingly, compound the problems of "rigid reference" and the contextual (indexical) implications of personal names.[42] They also offer particularly rich examples of deference demands and automatic contextual linking.[43]

This ideology includes a rich role for sounds, emphasized in letter clusters that have no semantic meaning (often called *voces magicae*). Some of these letter groupings are clearly derived from divine names or the sounds of the cosmic elements, since in the ideology of the creative divine name cosmic sounds are the sounds of the divine names.[44] Patricia Cox Miller argues that these types of "nonsense" words reveal a fundamental truth about language: "When language is revealed for what it truly is—a speaking of the unspeakable—it is incomprehensible, not to be resolved in a final word or in words at all."[45] However, ancient ideas about sound symbolism instead seem to claim that language can represent reality, and specifically at the level of sounds. Language remains the clearest representation of truth, but not a truth based on standard semantic reference. This special representational capacity comes from the idea that names are not conventional even at the level of sound.

Somewhat ironically, the magical power of names, which is often said to characterize magical language, was placed at the heart of Jewish mysticism when Gershom Scholem gave pride of place to the Hekhalot ascent texts.[46] The ascent in *Hekhalot Rabbati* (sections XIII ff.) exploits the same transformational model of heavenly liturgy as *The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* but

42 For example, the verbal taboos may "adhere" to the written form, as noted by Fleming, "Name Taboos," 157.

43 The apparent "natural" efficacy of divine names contrasts with conventional performativity as described for Austinian speech acts (N. Janowitz, "Speech Acts and Divine Names: Comparing Linguistic Ideologies," in *Religion and Language*, ed. R.A. Yelle (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming).

44 Some of the letter strings are transliterated Greek and may reflect still more ideas about sounds (H. Levy, "Sentence Fragments and Nouns in Greek in Hekhalot Rabbati," [Hebrew], *Studies in Jewish Hellenism*, ed. Louis Feldman (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1969), 59–65. See above, Frankfurter, Chapter 22.

45 Patricia Cox Miller "In Praise of Nonsense," in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, ed. A.H. Armstrong (New York: Crossroads, 1986), 483.

46 These have a complex redactional history: see P. Schäfer, "The Problem of the Redactional Identity of Hekhalot Rabbati," in *Hekhalot-Studien*, ed. Schäfer, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 63–74; R. Boustan, M. Himmelfarb, and P. Schäfer, *Hekhalot Literature in Context: Between Byzantium and Babylonia* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013). For the continuing influence of Scholem and the resulting emphasis on the Hekhalot texts and the classification of magic as the poor relation of mysticism, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 323.

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in this case as part of a ritual that includes more diverse techniques.[47] The hymns used in the ascents in *Hekhalot Rabbati* still supply the basic "fuel" for the ascent, as in the Qumran *Songs*. But in the Hekhalot texts, divine names and their sounds constitute the core of each blessing and thus of the liturgy in general. The hymns build the blessings and praises—patterns familiar from standardized liturgy—into dense patterns which divorce the blessing formulas from specific goals and re-orient them towards the general pattern of heavenly praise.[48]

Combinations of names and sounds appear in many late antique ascent texts. In the *Gospel of the Egyptians* from the Nag Hammadi library (NHC III.2, IV.2), the hymn singer ascends by reciting hymns that include names along with strings of vowels.[49] The hymns have phrases such as "IE IEUS EO …," "O glorious name," and "this, your great name." The ascent is outlined as it is enacted with more explicit signaling than in the Qumran *Songs*, giving this ascent a different didactic structure. For example, the ascender recounts, "I see you, I one invisible before everyone," and "I have merged with the one who does not change."[50]

In *Hekhalot Rabbati*, the ascending human shows "seals" to the heavenly guards in order to pass safely through the heavens. Seals were a standard Greco-Roman means of demonstrating authority, one readily embraced throughout rabbinic literature.[51] The only particularly Jewish nuance of this standard idea is the equation of seals with Jewish divine names. A seal could be an amulet with the divine name written on it or perhaps a divine name written directly

47 For the text see P. Schäfer, M. Schlüter, and H.-G. v. Mutius, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981). For introductions see J. Davila, "Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Hekhalot Rabbati," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45 (1994): 208–26; M. Smith, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati"; Schäfer, "Redactional Identity of Hekhalot Rabbati." *Hekhalot Rabbati* is an eclectic text that includes before the ascent rite a series of apocalypses, descriptions of a prayer ritual in heaven, and lists of divine names and after some final hymns and two appended stories about forgetting learning.

48 On hymn structure, see J. Maier, "Serienbildung und 'numinoser' Eindruckseffeckt in den poetischen Stucken der Hekhalot Literatur," *Semitics* 3 (1973): 36–66, and K. Grozinger, "Singen und ekstatische Sprache in der frühen jüdischen Mystik," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 11, no. 1 (1980): 66–77. The function of the poetic structures in replicating the heavenly cosmology is more important than their psychological (ecstatic) effect on the reciter.

49 *ACM*, 66–68 no. 40. J.M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 204–5.

50 *ACM*, 69–70.

51 Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1960).

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on the body.[52] Ascent is still primarily language-based, in both oral and written form. Divine names and sounds have a nonconventional relationship with divinity, so once again magical language is at the center of a mystical rite.

P.S. Alexander compares the ascent in *Hekhalot Rabbati*, which he calls "the Great Séance," to the famous report by Porphyry of his teacher Plotinus's self-disclosure in the Temple of Isis.[53] According to this report, Plotinus submitted to an Egyptian priest's request that his (Plotinus's) guiding spirit be revealed by a ritual investigation, but the ritual was botched because the priest's assistant strangled the birds used in the rite. While it is hard to tell exactly what was supposed to have happened in this temple rite, it was not an ascent but a revelation of Plotinus's level of divinity.

Plotinus does call upon his followers to ascend to the One and thus offers an interesting comparison with the ascent techniques discussed thus far.[54] Ascent in his case is understood as a journey inwards, as he states, for example, "Withdraw into yourself and look." He may be referring to visualization techniques, an interesting new technique.[55] In the main, however, Plotinus was interested in pursuing divinity by means of the correct interpretation of the Platonic texts and the complex task of trying to systematize contradictory points from different dialogues.[56] Language still provided the most important path to divine truth. The general themes of his approach follow tropes familiar from Plato: language has its limits, but the best path is using language as clearly as possible. Schroeder summarizes as follows: "Language will never disclose the One.... Yet we may use language about, or discuss, the One, so long as we are aware of the limitations of speech."[57] We can see Plotinus walking this fine line. He mentions, for example, that Pythagoreans named their god Apollo. This name, he asserts, means "Not-many," *a-pollos*, which he thought demonstrated a certain kind of wisdom. At the same time, he vehemently attacks "Know-It-Alls" (Gnostics) based on their ideas about language. These

52 Meir Bar-Ilan, "Magical Seals on the Body among Jews in the First Centuries C.E.," *Tarbiz* 57 (1988): 37–50 (Hebrew).

53 P.S. Alexander, "Prayer in the Heikhalot Literature," in *Priere, mystique et judaisme: Colloque de Strasbourg, 10–12 septembre 1984*, ed. Roland Goetschel (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1987), 77. For the account by Porphyry see *Life of Plotinus*, 10.

54 Still valuable is the analysis by J.M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 213–30.

55 *Enneads* 1.vi.1. See the discussion of these techniques in S. Ahbel-Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

56 *Life of Plotinus*, 15.

57 F.M. Schroeder, "Plotinus and Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 344.

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misguided individuals tell silly stories that include ridiculous names for God. The secret-names found in *Hekhalot Rabbati* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* would have offended his sensibilities. Better to use dialectic modes of investigating Platonic terminology.

In particular Plotinus' form of investigating divinity emphasized the limits of discourse. The deity exists outside bodily experience and beyond the materiality of language. Plotinus did not invent this idea but pushed it to new extremes. Similar to some of the gnostics he attacked, he argued that divinity can be located based not on what can be defined but instead on what is "beyond" definition.[58] It is a mistake, however, to adopt this linguistic ideology and then to argue that the limits of definitions are maps of the reality behind words, and especially then to argue that this gap can be used as a proof of the reality of certain types of experience.[59]

Even though Plotinus denounced the use of nonsense by others—that is, their linguistic theories—he believed it was possible to extrapolate reality from language. For him, as for Plato, a natural connection between words and reality motivated the linguistic investigation of truth, especially in terms of the gap between a word and what it stood for. Like the *mystai*, Plotinus insisted on textual interpretation as the path to divinity because it was through words that he could clarify the limitations of words. His other techniques, such as visualization, were subordinated to his linguistic ideology which, again like the *mystai* was the ultimate key to understanding.

4 Example D: Words, Sounds and Breath

Our final example is the "Mithras Liturgy," from an early fourth-century CE papyrus, which follows a soul on its seven-stage journey of transformation.[60]

58 Jufresa is correct about the similarities between Plotinus and Basilides even if direct borrowing from the latter by the former is unlikely (M. Jufresa, "Basilides, A Path to Plotinus," *VC 35* [1981]: 1–15.).

59 Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*.

60 *PGM* IV.475–829. For translation and commentary see M.W. Meyer, *The "Mithras Liturgy."* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976); *GMPT*, 48–54. For discussions focused on the issue of ascent in this text see S. Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in Its Cultural Milieu," in *Envisioning Magic* ed. Peter Schaefer and Hans Kippenberg, (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1997), 165–93; M. Himmelfarb, "The Practice of Ascent in the Ancient Mediterranean World," in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, ed. J.J. Collins and M. Fishbane (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 121–37; M. Stoholski, "'Welcome to Heaven, Please Watch Your Step': The 'Mithras Liturgy' and the Homeric Quotations in the Paris Papyrus," *Helios* 34 (2007): 69–94.

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The rite is a combination of multifunctional uses of language (prayers, names, strings of letters) with breathing, making hissing noises, and sounds described as "bellowing." It is from the compilation called the Greek Magical Papyri,[61] although they include only a few references to *mageia* (and none in proximity to the "Mithras Liturgy").[62]

In the "Mithras Liturgy," much like Plotinus's notion of ascent, "a journey up seems to be a journey inside the self, a beholding of the immortal nature beyond the bounds of mortality and Fate."[63] But unlike Plotinus' ascent, the transformation in this liturgy remakes a human body into a cosmic body via identification with constitutive elements of the cosmos (breath, rays of the sun, etc.). In this final example of ascent, we see a more detailed transformation of the individual ascending into a new type of being via a rite that combines oral formulas with a variety of ways of making sounds and other actions, such as kissing amulets for protection. Liturgy has been replaced by others ways of talking like divine beings, supplemented by more diverse actions.

The liturgical engine is familiar, but the text includes numerous instructions offered by an authorial voice not participating in the rite. The ascent begins with a prayer using the imagery of creation: "First origin of my origin."[64] The use of "my" specifically draws the speaker back to his origin, from which the transformational process unfolds. The first prayer also uses the imagery of rebirth, with the new birth being explicitly modeled on language: "that I may be born again in thought."[65]

Once in the upper regions, the ascender tries to pass himself off as a natural inhabitant of the heavens, self-reflexively redefining himself as a cosmic being: "I am a star."[66] The ascender tries to convince the heavenly beings that he belongs where he is, naming himself as a heavenly occupant. He also demonstrates that his transformation has formally identified his body with the cosmos by talking like a heavenly being. He knows the names of the beings he encounters and the proper way to speak, even using the word "Silence" and thus signaling that he knows his way around the heavenly world.[67] The utterance seems, as in the examples of the *Songs*, to be an index of his newfound status.

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61 See above, Dieleman, Chapter 13.

62 References at *PGM* I.127, 331; IV.211, 243, 2082, 2290, 2319, 2450, 2454; LXIII.5.

63 J. Tabor, *Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in Its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 77.

64 "Mithras Liturgy," *PGM* IV.487.

65 "Mithras Liturgy," *PGM* IV.509.

66 "Mithras Liturgy," *PGM* IV.574. This is a wonderful example of redefinition that has pragmatic implications, indexing the new status of the speaker by his new name.

67 "Mithras Liturgy," *PGM* IV.574.

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Distinct nonverbal actions are also part of the transformational process, techniques that might challenge the classification of the rite as a mystical communion. After reciting the first prayers, the individual is instructed to "draw in breath from the rays" (IV.539). Lest the reader not understand this allusion, the text explains: "Draw in breath from the rays, drawing up three time as much as you can, and you will see yourself being lifted up and ascending to the height, so that you seem to be in midair."[68] This breathing is a functional equivalent of ascending by means of reciting liturgy. The individual here ascends not only by speaking like a heavenly creature but by formally identifying his body with the cosmic elements. Language is the bridge to these techniques since breathing is close to speaking. Breathing exercises appear spaced out along the ritual process: for example, before the ascender describes himself as dying and passing away, he is told to "produce a long bellowing sound, straining your belly, that you may excite the five senses: bellow long until out of breath, and again kiss the amulets and say …"[69] Instructions are also given for making hissing and popping noises as the person ascending makes more use of sound symbolism, skipping any semantics entirely.

The text includes strings of *voces magicae*, some of which appear to be names, as in, for example, "Hail to you, the first AIERONTHI."[70] These strings are similar to the names in rabbinic prayers, each one bringing into the prayers the transformative power that corresponds to the cosmic element being named ("and the sacred spirit may breathe in me, NECHTHEN APOTOY NECHTHIN ARPI ETH").[71]

Ritual techniques that deploy primarily language seem more rational than the techniques employed in this ascent. While breathing, making sounds and kissing amulets all have mundane contexts (just like any words), such non-verbal techniques seem to be more "magical" in their materiality and performativity. They are certainly as self-reflexive as words are (as seen very clearly in the self-reflexive verbs in speech acts). But ideas about words are only tangentially related to theoretical explanations of language.[72] The use of words to achieve social goals should not be confused with proof that words actually are privileged maps of truth and reality and thus *not* "magical".[73] Modern scholars have mistakenly elevated ancient linguistic ideologies into theories about the

68 "Mithras Liturgy," *PGM* IV.539–540.

69 "Mithras Liturgy," *PGM* IV.704–708.

70 "Mithras Liturgy," *PGM* IV.688.

71 "Mithras Liturgy," *PGM* IV.510.

72 See in particular Silverstein, "Linguistic Imagination," 95.

73 Steven Katz similarly criticized the modern study of mysticism but without offering an alternative theory (S. Katz, "Language, Epistemology and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Katz [London: Sheldon, 1978], 22–74; S. Katz, "On Mysticism").

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truth of certain experiences and the corresponding value of certain ritual techniques.[74] At a theoretical level, techniques sort themselves out not into magical or mystical but instead into different ways of using words and objects to reach the variegated goals striven for by human actions.

Suggested Readings

Boustan, Ra'anan and Joseph Sanzo, "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity," *HTR* 110 (2017): 217–40.

Fleming, Luke, "Name Taboos and Rigid Performativity," *Anthropological Quarterly* 84 (2011): 141–64.

Janowitz, Naomi, "Re-creating Genesis: The Metapragmatics of Divine Speech," in *Reflexive Language*, ed. J. Lucy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 393–405.

Janowitz, Naomi, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity*. Magic in History (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002).

Janowitz, Naomi, "Speech Acts and Divine Names: Comparing Linguistic Ideologies," in *Language and Religion*, ed. R.A. Yelle; C. Lehrich; and C. Handman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

Johnston, Sarah Iles, "Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in Its Cultural Milieu," in *Envisioning Magic* ed. Peter Schaefer and Hans Kippenberg, (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1997), 165–93.

Katz, Steven, "Language, Epistemology and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Katz (London: Sheldon, 1978), 22–74.

Katz, Steven, "On Mysticism." *JAAR* 56, no. 4 (1988): 751–57.

LiPuma, Edward, and Benjamin Lee, "Performativity of Ritual Exchange: A Melanesian Example," in *Exchange and Sacrifice*, ed. J. Stewart and A. Strathern (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), 95–137.

Newsom, Carol, "'He Has Established Himself Priests': Human and Angelic Priesthood in the Qumran Shabbath Shirot," in *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence Schiffman (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 101–20.

Proudfoot, Wayne, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

Sells, Michael, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994).

Smith, Morton, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati," in *Biblical and Others Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 142–60.

Stoholski, Mark, "'Welcome to Heaven, Please Watch Your Step': The 'Mithras Liturgy' and the Homeric Quotations in the Paris Papyrus," *Helios* 34 (2007): 69–94.

74 This includes seeing reality as mapped by the destruction of reference, as in Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*.

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CHAPTER 26

Magic and Theurgy

Sarah Iles Johnston

1 Introduction

In order to address the utility of the concept of "magic" to interpret ancient theurgy, let me begin with a definition that might apply. Magic, let us say, is the use of rituals that are available only to those who have acquired them through special means—perhaps by being trained by a teacher, perhaps by purchasing the knowledge from a ritual specialist, perhaps by being initiated into a particular cult whose ritual technologies are kept secret from non-initiates, or perhaps by some combination of all three of these. These "magical" rituals enable those who perform them to accomplish extraordinary things in either the physical world, the spiritual world, or both. This definition has the drawback of not being entirely "etic"—that is, it reflects ancient views of *mageia* more than a modern comprehensive category "magic"—but it also has the advantage of capturing the sense of magic that was often applied to theurgy.

So what is theurgy? 'Theurgy' (θεουργία) is a word that has been applied to a number of religious systems that share three traits. First, theurgy involves the performance of rituals much like those that characterize "magic," especially in their reflection of some learned tradition. For example, theurgists were initiated into a mystery cult and acquired knowledge of its special rituals from other initiates who served as teachers—although they also relied on written sources that either were transcripts of mediumistic trances or had been composed by earlier theurgists.

Secondly, theurgists claimed that the most important rituals they performed promoted the purification of their souls and, eventually, their ability to send them out of the material world into higher realms where they would interact with at least the lower ranks of the divine hierarchy. After death, a completely purified soul would escape reincarnation—the fate that awaited unpurified souls. Some of the theurgists' other rituals worked on the material world: they claimed to be able to bring on rain during a drought, for example.

And thirdly, theurgists understood themselves to pursue both their material and spiritual aims with the willing support of the gods and other benign entities such as *daimones, angeloi*, and *archangeloi*. The theurgists used this claim to set themselves apart from *magoi*, whom ancient critics—and

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sometimes, ancient magicians themselves—portrayed as coercing the higher powers. Indeed, some theurgists thought of themselves as having relatively little to do with the success of their rituals; rather, they understood that the gods (*theoi*) would charitably work (*ergia*) upon them as long as they had properly prepared themselves to receive the gods' beneficence, which they could do by learning how to align themselves properly within the cosmos and its powers.[1]

While theurgists practiced rituals that we (or other ancient people) might identify as "magic"—that is, roughly evoking the features listed above—the theurgists themselves rejected that label. Later in this essay, I will look closely at some of the theurgic rituals that evoked the label 'magic.'[2] But the theurgists claimed that, in contrast to *magoi*, they worked with the cooperation of the gods rather than by coercing them, and that they worked for the higher purpose, ultimately, of purifying their souls, rather than towards quotidian purposes such as the *magoi* did (e.g., the incitement of sexual passion or the acquisition of wealth).

Still, many have labelled theurgy 'magic': both the philosophers and Christians who railed against it during antiquity, followed by most of the scholars who have studied theurgy during the 20th and 21st centuries. This essay will discuss the history of theurgy on its own terms, followed by a review of the ritual elements common to theurgy that, in many cases, have invited the application of the term magic among ancient and modern writers.

2 A Brief History of Theurgy

The word 'theurgy'[3] was coined to apply to a ritual system that emerged during the second century CE, the doctrines of which were rooted in Platonic

1 E.g., Iamblicus *De Mysteriis*. 1.12, 42.2–15, and 3.17, 139.15, and cf. the discussions of Peter Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies: Iamblichus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Religion and Magic in Late Antiquity," *The Ancient World* 32 (2001): 25–38; Andrew Smith, *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague: Springer, 1974), 85–88; and Gregory Shaw, "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," *Traditio* 61 (1985): 1–28.

2 Further on definitions of the word 'theurgy' see Radcliffe Edmonds, "'The Illuminations of Theurgy: Philosophy and Magic,'" in *Drawing Down the Moon: Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

3 The first use of the word 'theurgy' comes from Porphyry, as quoted by Augustine e.g., *Civitas Dei* 10.9 = Porphyry, fr. 286 in A. Smith, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1993). The word appears frequently in Iamblichus' *On the Mysteries*, and is found in the emperor Julian (*Orationes*, 7.219a) as well as many later authors. Julian's case is interesting, as he says that it was in part through Dionysus' knowledge of theurgy that he became a god. (see Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler, "'Nur der Weise ist Priester': Rituale und Ritualkritik

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philosophy. The system was further developed (and critiqued) by later Platonists such as Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus and Damascius.[4] The earliest use of the cognate word 'theurgists' (θεουργόι) is found either in the works of the musician and mathematician Nicomachus of Gerasa[5] or in a fragment of the *Chaldean Oracles*, divinely inspired hexameter poems that were considered theurgy's sacred texts (the answer depends on how we date Nicomachus and the *Oracles*, each of which belongs somewhere in the middle to late second century).[6] Nicomachus mentioned the theurgists in the course of discussing the ritual power of the seven vowels—although what he described the theurgists doing was somewhat different: he claimed that they performed invocations by making hissing and popping noises and other inarticulate sounds. As for the *Chaldean Oracles*, tradition said that they had been received from the gods by a ritual expert who called himself Julian the Chaldean, and by his son, who came to be known as Julian the Theurgist, both of whom lived under the reign of Marcus Aurelius.[7] The younger Julian is also credited with having recorded other divinely inspired treatises on theurgic matters.[8] Scholars now agree that the rudiments of this tradition are correct at least insofar as our fragments of the *Oracles* suggest a date in the late second century CE.[9]

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bei Porphyrius," in *Religion und Kritik in der Antike*, ed. U. Berner and I. Tanaseanu-Döbler, Religionswissenschaftliche Studien 7 (Muenster: LIT, 2008), esp. 135–40). We have no other information on this tradition—if, indeed, it was not just an idea of Julian's himself.

4 As Polymnia Athanassiadi notes, '… from Iamblichus to Damascius, a commentary on the Oracles in oral or written guise was considered the crowning achievement of an exegetical career. Equally, for a student to be admitted to a course on the Chaldaean Oracles amounted to an acknowledgement that he was part of the golden chain and on the short list for the Platonic succession.' (P. Athanassiadi, "The Chaldaean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy," in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, ed. Athanassiadi and M. Frede (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 149–84). On Plotinus and theurgy, see most recently Zeke Mazur, "'Unio Magica: Part I: On the Magical Origins of Plotinus' Mysticism,'" *Dionysius* 21 (2003): 23–52, and Mazur, "'Unio Mystica: Part II: Plotinus, Theurgy and the Question of Ritual,'" *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 29–56, which argue, against long-standing scholarly opinions, that Plotinus incorporated some theurgic practices into his contemplative approach to purifying the soul.

5 Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Excerpta*, 6. 276–12–18.

6 *Chaldean Oracles* Fr. 153 = Lydus *De mensibus* II, 10; 31, 16–19 W. The fragment reads 'For the theurgists do not fall into the herd that is subject to Fate.'

7 Date: Suda, s.v. 'Iulianus' 434, Proclus, *In Platonis Rempublicam commentarii*, II.123.12–13. According to one tradition, the elder Julian 'introduced' the soul of his son to that of Plato: Michael Psellus, *de Aurea Catena*, 217.2–7; now in Psellus, *Philosophica Minora*, ed. John M. Duffy, vol. I: Opuscula logica, physica, allegorica, alia (Leipzig: Teubner, 1992), 46.

8 Suda, s.v. 'Iulianus', 434.

9 On the traditions concerning the Julians, the date of the *Oracles* (and thereby the date of the origin of theurgy) and the circumstances under which both the *Oracles* and theurgy may

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It is on the ritual system attributed to the two Julians and its development during the first five centuries CE that I will focus in this essay.[10] It is worth commenting first, however, on some of the later ways in which the word 'theurgy' was used. Early Christians with philosophical training, such as Synesius of Cyrene, knew the *Chaldean Oracles* (fragments 158 and 188 of the *Chaldean Oracles*, for instance, are quoted by Synesius), and their expositions of Christian doctrines at times show traces of theurgic influence, even if they do not explicitly credit it.[11] In the sixth century, a Christian who came to be identified with Dionysius the Areopagite went further, using 'theurgy' to describe Christian sacraments through which God manifested himself in the material world, such as the Eucharist.[12] Dionysius, then, like his pagan predecessors, understood 'theurgy' as a positive label for ritual actions directed towards improvement of the soul through the reception of divine beneficence, and thus he set theurgy in opposition to 'magic' as had the theurgists themselves. He further valorized the term by using it to characterize the miracles performed by Jesus.[13]

Dionysius stood in contrast to earlier Christians such as Augustine, who not only restricted the use of 'theurgy' to pagan rituals, but papered over any distinctions that the theurgists made between their own practices and those of magicians. Augustine argued that, like all other forms of magic, theurgy was nothing more than a ruse by which demons disguised as gods led people away from the proper worship of the real God.[14] Arguments like these set the tone for centuries to come. Michael Psellus, a philosopher and historian of the 11th century, was a dedicated student of theurgic treatises and particularly of Proclus' works on the topic; we are indebted to him for many of our fragments of the *Oracles* as well as much of our other information about theurgy.[15]

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have developed, see esp. Athanassiadi, "The Chaldean Oracles" (although I am hesitant about her suggestion that the Julians were attached to the temple of Bel in Apamea).

10 A more complete history of late antique theurgy can be found in Edmonds, "'The Illuminations of Theurgy." See also Athanassiadi, "The Chaldean Oracles," for an excellent overview of the transmission of the fragments of the *Oracles* that remain to us, through Proclus, Damascius and later Psellus.

11 See now Tanaseanu-Döbler, "'Nur der Weise ist Priester,'" esp. 225–60.

12 Pseudo-Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. He used the term twice in the first three sentences and 31 times throughout. See the discussions of Struck, "Pagan and Christian Theurgies"; Gregory Shaw, "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite," *JECS* 7, no. 4 (1999): 573–99; and Sarah Klitenic-Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

13 E.g., *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 423b.

14 Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, 10.9–10, 16, 26–28, 32.

15 On Psellus and theurgy, see J. Duffy, "Reactions of Two Byzantine Intellectuals to the Theory and Practice of Magic: Michael Psellos and Michael Italikos," in *Byzantine Magic*,

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But although Psellus' remarks often betray a deep interest in both theurgic rituals and the philosophical systems of theurgy (at times, he even suggested that the theology inherent in the *Oracles* agreed with Christian doctrine), officially he took care to repudiate such dangerously pagan ideas, and to distance himself from any suspicion that he might be practicing theurgy.

In the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, an edition of the *Oracles* with commentary, heavily influenced by Psellus' work, was produced by Gemistus Pletho under the title *The Magical Oracles of the Magi of Zoroaster*.[16] An ardent devotee of Platonism more generally (against the Aristotelian tide of the time—a point that eventually led to his being brought up on charges of heresy), Pletho saw in theurgy the potential for a new, universalizing religion. He does not seem to have gotten very far with that mission, but another endeavor bore significant fruit. Pletho encouraged Cosimo de Medici to found a new Academy, under whose roof Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) began to translate ancient theurgic texts, including a key treatise by Iamblichus to which Ficino was the first to give the title *On the Mysteries of Egypt*, and Proclus' *On the Hieratic Art*, from which we derive information about the theurgic uses of *symbola*.[17]

Ficino's own *Three Books on Life* includes extensive discussion of practices that we can trace to ancient theurgy (and to Hermeticism) such as the use of *symbola* to animate statues and to treat a variety of bodily and spiritual problems.[18] And yet, although he tried to synthesize ideas such as these with Christianity, Ficino was careful to avoid calling the practices that he advocated

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ed. Henry Maguire (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 83–97; and É. Des Places, ed., trans. and comm., *Oracles Chaldaïques* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971), 46–52.

16 We know of Pletho's work on the *Oracles* through secondary sources such as Johannes Opsopäus, *Oraculas magica Zoroastris cum scholiis Plethonis et Pselli nunc primum editi* (Paris: 1607) and Thomas Stanley, *The Chaldaick oracles of Zoroaster and his follower, with the expositions of Pletho and Psellus* (London: 1661). See also Brian Copenhaver, "Iamblichus, Synesius and The Chaldaean Oracles in Marsilio Ficino's De Vita Libri Tres: Hermetic Magic or Neoplatonic Magic," in *Supplementum Festivum. Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. James Hankins, John Monfasani and Frederick Purnell, Jr., Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 49 (Binghamton NY: Medieval and Renaissance texts and studies, 1987), 441–56.

17 Further discussion of the influences on Ficino in Copenhaver, "Iamblichus, Synesius and The Chaldaean Oracles," and Copenhaver, "Hermes Trismegistus, Proclus and a Philosophy of Magic," in *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988), 79–110 and passim; and Carol Kaske and John R. Clark, eds, trans., and comms., *Marsilio Ficino. Three Books on Life*., Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 57 (Binghamton, NY: Renaissance Society of America, 1989).

18 Kaske and Clark, *Marsilio Ficino*, 25–31, and comm. ad loc.

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'theurgy,' which, for him, implied the heretical worship of powers lesser than God.[19]

Theurgy, then, continued to fascinate the intellectuals who encountered it, but they were unable to disentangle its rituals from their pagan, and implicitly magical, roots and so they kept their distance from the term 'theurgy' itself. Towards the end of the following century, Giordano Bruno tried to rehabilitate the reputation of some forms of magic, particularly those that could be called 'natural' (i.e., those applying the physical laws such as sympathy and antipathy), but he utterly condemned theurgy as a form of cult paid to deceptive demons, which made the desperate worshipper into a vessel for their evil purposes.[20]

The fate of the word 'theurgy' wavered throughout the later Renaissance and early modern period; the Solomonic *grimoire* known as the *Lemegeton* or *Lesser Key* contrasts *theurgeia* with *goeteia*, as a means of summoning good spirits rather than harmful, which suggests that in some quarters, at least, it had regained its more positive connotations. A glance at the *Oxford English Dictionary* entries 'theurgy,' 'theurgist,' 'theurgic' and 'theurgical' shows that among English-speakers, theurgy carried a variety of meanings and intonations between the 16th and 19th centuries, which can be summarized under four rubrics: (1) It was used in scholarly works such as Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (mid-16th century) more or less accurately to designate the ancient system as its original practitioners had described it. (2) it eventually became synonymous with 'the marvelous': thus, Prime Minister (and classicist) William Gladstone could write in 1858 of 'the Olympian court' being the 'masterpiece of the whole theurgy of Homer.' (3) It was used loosely to refer to any form of magic whose practitioners erroneously considered themselves to be superior in expertise and purity of aim. (4) And finally, it frequently continued to denote a deceptive or dangerous practice that corrupted the finer points of philosophy, threatened to draw people away from proper spiritual pursuits, or both: "The turbid streams of theurgy and magic flowed into the broad river of Christian thought by two channels, the later Neoplatonism, and Jewish Cabbalism."[21]

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19 These matters are discussed throughout the introduction to Kaske and Clark, *Marsilio Ficino*. See also D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic, from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Warburg Institute, 1958; reprint: Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), which includes discussion as well of Ficino's transmission of theurgic ideas to Cornelius Agrippa, Campanella and others.

20 Bruno, *On Magic*. The treatise is not divided into any sections; the portion I cite appears near the beginning.

21 W.R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1899).

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The continuing dominance of the last two denotations makes it somewhat surprising that in the mid-twentieth century, 'theurgy' made a leap forward in respectability, at least in scholarly quarters, by being borrowed to describe certain strands of Jewish mysticism. It seems to have been Gershom Scholem who led the way, first by comparing Merkabah mysticism to theurgy in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*[22] (although without specifying exactly what he meant by the word); and then by using 'theurgy' as a synonym for aspects of Jewish practice in *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*.[23] In the latter case his reasons for the comparison were probably in part historical (he investigated the relationship between the Lesser Hekhaloth and the magical papyri, which were composed at about the same time as ancient theurgy emerged), but in part they were phenomenological as well, for Scholem used the word 'theurgy' freely to describe ascent-centered mysticism as a category. Early in *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, Moshe Idel offered an overview of the relationship between ancient theurgy and early Jewish mysticism,[24] and then he used 'theurgy' more generally, and positively, to describe Jewish practices.[25] In recent years, other scholars of Jewish mysticism have adopted the term as well.[26]

The application of 'theurgy' to Jewish mysticism—and the accompanying restoration of the term to full respectability, even admirability—was probably encouraged by the friendship between Scholem and Hans Lewy, the latter of whom wrote a massive book that began to make ancient theurgy and the *Chaldean Oracles* acceptable subjects of academic study.[27] And yet (to begin to return at last to the ancient system on which the rest of this essay will focus and to the topic to which the present volume is devoted) one of the first, and

22 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Schocken Books, 1941), e.g., 56, 77.

23 Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), esp. chapter 10.

24 Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 40–41.

25 Idel, *Kabbalah*. In fact, an entire chapter is entitled 'Ancient Jewish Theurgy' (156–72). Idel defines 'theurgy' as '… operations intended to influence the Divinity, mostly in its own inner state or dynamics, but sometimes also in its relationship to man. In contrast to the magician, the ancient and medieval Jewish theurgian focused his activity on accepted religious values' (157).

26 E.g., Elliot R. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia—kabbalist and prophet: hermeneutics, theosophy, and theurgy* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2000); Pinchas Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine: Symbolization and theurgy in the later strata of the Zohar* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1993).

27 Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1956), posthumously published in 1956 following Lewy's death in 1945; second corrected edition by Michel Tardieu, Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1978. According to Tardieu's *Notice* at the back of the new edition, Scholem spoke at Lewy's memorial service.

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best qualified, reviewers of Lewy's book, E.R. Dodds,[28] observed that in 512 pages, relatively little had been said about practices that could be called magic, within either theurgy or other ancient systems to which theurgy might be compared; apparently Lewy was not as interested in contextualizing theurgy within similar ritual practices of the first centuries CE as he was in exploring its metaphysics and its philosophical background.

For many years following Lewy, work on the rituals performed by theurgists continued to lag.[29] There is some irony in this, for at the time of theurgy's origin, there was no doubt that ritual practices lay at its heart, and no lack of debate among other Platonists about whether this was a merit or not. The dividing line fell between those who, like Plotinus, recommended using only the powers of the human intellect (i.e., philosophical discussion and contemplation)[30] to improve the soul and achieve the soul's eventual ascent; and those who, like Plotinus' student Iamblichus, believed that rituals were necessary as well. The treatise that Ficino later dubbed *On the Mysteries of Egypt* was an extended defense of the value of theurgic ritual, written by Iamblichus under the adopted name of Abammon, an Egyptian priest, in response to a challenge by Porphyry.[31] Porphyry himself seems to have wavered on the topic; he offers different opinions about the value of ritual in different works.[32] The Plotinian opinion that intellectual endeavors alone were acceptable not only negated the value of ritual by rejecting the possibility that material objects could have

28 E.R. Dodds, "New Light on the 'Chaldaean Oracles,'" *HTR* 54 (1961): 263–73; rpt. at the back of Tardieu's second edition of Lewy's book, 693–701. Dodds had written his own essay on theurgy some years earlier (Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 [1947]: 55–69, reprint in Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951], 283–311), in which he focused on the ritual system, sometimes comparing aspects of theurgy to modern spiritualism. Cf. the remarks of Pierre Hadot, "Bilan et perspectives sur les *Oracles Chaldaïques*," also printed at the back of Tardieu's edition, 703–20, which are more positive about Lewy's contribution to the study of theurgic ritual.

29 Some of the work I have published on the topic will be cited below. See also several subchapters on the topic in Carine van Liefferinge, *La théurgie des Oracles Chaldaïques à Proclus, Kernos* Suppl. 99 (Liege: Presses universitaires de Liège, 1999). On Iamblichus and ritual, see also Beate Nasemann, *Theurgie und Philosophie in Jamblichs de Mysteriis*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 11 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1991), and Emma C. Clarke, *Iamblichus'* De Mysteriis: *A Manifesto of the Miraculous* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

30 But see Mazur, "Unio Magica" and Mazur, "Unio Mystica" for an argument that Plotinus used rituals as well.

31 See the discussion in Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, trans., comm., *Iamblichus. On the Mysteries* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), xxvi–xxxvii.

32 Discussion in Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler, "'Nur der Weise ist Priester.'"

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any effect on the soul, but tended to suggest as well that the material world was an active source of spiritual corruption.[33] That concern is not completely absent from theurgy—the *Oracles* warn theurgists to beware of the "demonic dogs" of Hecate, which represent the lure of corporeal pleasures[34]—but theurgists were confident that the gods had taught them the proper ways to use material objects in rituals for the proper purposes.

But whatever the theurgists thought about their rituals and how they were, and were not, different from those contemporary practices they understood to be 'magic', as time went on, popular tradition increasingly portrayed the founders of the art as having a wide variety of ritual techniques at their command and as using those techniques for both spiritual and practical purposes. The two Julians, for example, came to rank among the most famous thaumaturges of antiquity. The older Julian was credited with using spoken commands to split stones, composing four books about *daemones*, and designing amulets to protect the body—all activities that would sit comfortably amongst the rites described by the Greek magical papyri and other ancient magical texts such as the *Testament of Solomon*.[35] The younger Julian was reputed to have composed treatises on theurgic rituals and to have served Marcus Aurelius on campaign by creating a mask that shot thunderbolts at the enemy and by conjuring up a rainstorm that saved the army from dying of thirst (the famous "rain miracle" of 172 CE, which different sources credited instead to an Egyptian philosopher named Arnouphis, to Jupiter or to the Christian God).[36] Proclus' biographer, Marinus, similarly claims that Proclus used a tool called the *iynx* (which theurgic sources otherwise associate with spiritual pursuits, below, section 4) to call

33 See John Finamore, "Plotinus and Iamblichus on Magic and Theurgy," *Dionysius* 17 (1999): 83–94; Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 1–27, esp. 4–5, 11–12 and 23–26; van Liefferinge "La théurgie des Oracles Chaldaïques," esp. 38–84. I discussed the more general question of the perceived differences between magic (*goēteia*) and theurgy in Sarah Iles Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldaean Oracles and Related Literature* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990; reprint: Oxford: Oxford University Press), chap. 6. Although I would now revisit some of my conclusions, the treatment is still a useful supplement to these others, as it focuses more closely on contextualizing theurgy within other rituals of the time and describing theurgic ritual as we see it in the *Oracles*.

34 Demon dogs as corporeal pleasures: see *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 87–91, and Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, chap. 9.

35 Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1.18.7; Suda, s.v. 'Iulianus,' 433.

36 Suda, s.v. 'Iulianus,' 434; Psellus, *Philosophica Minora*, vol. 1 opusc., 3 lines 142–47. On the rain miracle, see Garth Fowden, "Pagan Versions of the Rain Miracle of AD 172," *Historia* 36 (1987): 83–95, and M. Sage, "Eusebius and the Rain Miracle: Some Observations," *Historia* 36 (1987): 96–113.

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down rain and save Attica from a drought.[37] The younger Julian was also said to have competed with Apuleius and Apollonius of Tyana to save Rome from a plague; Apuleius promised to stop it in 15 days, and Apollonius in ten, but Julian won by stopping it with a single word.[38] Both Julians were credited with the ability to charm the soul out of and then back into the body.[39] In other words, when viewed from our modern perspective, the theurgists were practicing magic (as I defined it in the first section of this essay).

3 The Metaphysical System

But as a *system*—that is, as an *organized* body of rituals and beliefs that was passed from at least some teachers to their students—theurgy grew out of what we now call Middle Platonic philosophy and continued to develop alongside what we now call Neoplatonism for several centuries. The theurgists whose works we have inherited understood themselves as philosophers *as well as* ritual practitioners. Indeed, the theurgists insisted that what set their rituals apart from 'magic' was the fact that those rituals were rooted in philosophy and the understanding of the cosmos that this philosophy gave them. The theurgists claimed to be putting into effect metaphysical principles that had been woven into the universe at the beginning of time. In doing so, the theurgists claimed to be not only pursuing their private goals, but also participating in the on-going, demiurgic (re)creation of the cosmos.[40] Therefore, to understand why the theurgists performed the rituals that they did, we need to begin with a survey of the particular form of platonic metaphysics that they developed.[41]

37 Marinus, *Life of Proclus*, 28.

38 St. Anastasios of Sinai, *Patrologia Graeca*, 89, col. 252ab.

39 Proclus, *In Platonis Rempublicam commentarii*, II.123.9.

40 On theurgists participating in the demiurgic recreation of the cosmos, see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 47–50, 130–69, where crucial passages from Iamblichus are quoted and discussed) and also Beate Nasemann, *Theurgie und Philosophie in Jamblichs De mysteriis*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 11 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 231–82, esp. 247–82. An important related idea is that the descent of the individual soul is central to demiurgic recreation. On this, see Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, 81–126, and John Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 155–58.

41 This survey is necessarily brief. Excellent fuller treatments can be found in Edmonds, "The Illuminations of Theurgy;" also in John Finamore's contribution to an essay that I co-authored with him: John Finamore and S.I. Johnston, "The Chaldaean Oracles," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 161–73; and in Majercik's comments on individual

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The theurgists made Intellect (*Nous*) the highest god; this god was also called the Father.[42] The Father had transcendently enclosed himself within a supermundane realm called the Empyrean,[43] but he could act upon the material world and its inhabitants through a series of divine hypostases. Thus, for example, there was a Second Intellect who demiurgically formed the material world, using as his models the Ideas that the Father "thought" forth.[44] There was also a World Soul (which probably was identified by the theurgists with the goddess Hecate—a goddess central to the practice of ancient magic as we see it in, e.g., the magical papyri)[45] who mediated between the divine and human realms, and through whom generative forces passed from above to below. There were other transmissive, connecting agents, too. For example, *daemones* known as *ynges* participated in the transmission of the Ideas from the Father into the material world (at times, the *ynges* were identified with the Ideas themselves) and in the transmission of requests from humans to divinities.[46] The *symbola*—objects, words or sounds that helped to forge connections between the material and divine worlds—had been 'scattered' by the Father throughout the cosmos.[47]

More will be said about some of these agents in the section on ritual. For the moment, what I want to emphasize is that theurgic metaphysics and theurgic soteriology—and therefore the rituals that drew upon the metaphysics and that underpinned the soteriology—all depended upon the concept of

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fragments of the *Oracles* (Ruth Majercik, trans. and comm., *The Chaldean Oracles*, Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 5 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989).

42 E.g., *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 3, 7, 14.

43 E.g., *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 3.

44 *Chaldean Oracles* frs. 5, 33, 37, 39, 40.

45 Hecate as World Soul: Lutz Bergemann, *Kraftmetaphysik und Mysterienkult im Neuplatonismus. Ein Aspekt neuplatonischer Philosophie*, Beiträge zur Altertumkunde 234 (Leipzig: De Guyter, 2006), 271–95; Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*; Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 353–66. John Finamore, in his contribution to the essay mentioned in the previous note (in *Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Gerson), challenges the validity of this equation, positing instead that Hecate is the last of a number of female divinities who work to ensoul the world. He develops an earlier argument by R.M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary* (Leiden E. J. Brill, 2001), 252–59.

46 *Iynges* and Ideas: *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 77; Proclus, *In Cratylus*, 33.15. Much of the evidence is indirect and depends on context; for discussion and citations see Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 132–7; Fr. Cremer, *Die chaldäischen Orakel und Jamblich « De mysteriis »*, Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 26 (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1969), 74; O. Geudtner, *Die Seelenlehre der Chaldäischen Orakel*, Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 35 (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1971), 43–45; Des Places, ed., *Oracles Chaldaïques*, 14; Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 103–7.

47 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 108.

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a stratified cosmos that became increasingly pure as one ascended, but also upon the possibility of interaction between humans and the entities inhabiting those higher strata. There was, necessarily, a tension inherent in this combination, but it was a creative tension: some of the most innovative and interesting aspects of theurgic ritual arise from the theurgists' understanding that, although the boundaries between realms had to hold firm for the cosmos to operate properly, they might be temporarily transcended when one used the proper ritual techniques. The concept of *sympatheia*, which was familiar to Neoplatonists—that one part of the cosmos or an object within the cosmos is connected to other, physically distant parts or objects—was important here as well.[48] A sympathetic view of the cosmos not only was central to theurgic metaphysics, but was also the key to identifying objects within the material world that could be used to contact entities who dwelt in the realms above it, as we will see.

One more aspect of theurgic metaphysics is important for understanding theurgic ritual. Following, again, the lead of Plato, the theurgists understood the Father to consist of pure, fiery light,[49] and what passed from him through the intervening strata into the material world to be fiery and light-filled as well.[50] Thus for example, the Second Intellect hurled the Ideas like thunder or lightning bolts into the 'lightning-receiving womb' of Hecate; from there, they subsequently moved into the material realm (*CO* frs. 34, 35, 37). Light itself (as we know it in our material realm) came from the Father, passing first through a hypercosmic sun and then through the sun of our own world. Because divinity was understood to be essentially light, theurgic rituals often involved the manipulation or invocation of light.[51]

48 Although the term *sympatheia* itself is not directly associated with theurgy until Psellus, *Expositio In Oracula Chaldaica*, *Patrologia graeca* [hereafter = *PG*] 1153 A, Iamblichus frequently adduces it under the name "*philia*" in order to explain the operation of the cosmos and how ritual can participate in it, and Synesius discusses it in a way suggesting its centrality to theurgy: e.g., Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 5.10, 211.3–6 and 5.26, 239.6–13. Further on Iamblichus and *philia*, see the discussions throughout Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul* (as cited in the index). Iamblichus' *philia* also draws on the theurgic Eros, who was a connecting force (see discussion at Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 14–16).

49 E.g., *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 3, 37.

50 Plato and light: e.g., *Republica.* 7, 541a ff. This was picked up by non-theurgic Platonists as well, such as Plotinus: *Enneads*, 1.1.4.12–18, 1.7.1.19–29, etc.

51 On the centrality of light in theurgy, see most recently Bergemann, *Kraftmetaphysik und Mysterienkult*.

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4 Theurgic Rituals

In implementing their metaphysical ideas, as we will see in what follows, the theurgists were inclined to draw on rituals that were familiar from Greek religion as practiced by ordinary people and on magic as it was performed by the practitioners who used, for instance, what we now call the Greek Magical Papyri. However, the theurgists reinterpreted these ritual traditions both literally—theurgy's apologists went to some lengths to explain why their rites worked—and in practice—that is, they used some of the same objects or substances as did mainstream rites, but in different ways. In some cases, there was no existing ritual that suited the theurgists' purposes, even if they adapted it—but, as we will see, theurgists could be quite inventive in filling the gaps.

4.1 Iynges

The theurgists' use of *ἰynges* is a good example of the way in which they could adapt existing magical rituals and techniques. The *ἰynx* was a magical tool in use from at least the mid-fifth century BCE; it was associated almost exclusively with drawing reluctant lovers to the doors of those who wielded it.[52] The word has two different referents when it describes such a tool: it might mean a bird that could twist its neck around almost completely (which is usually identified by scholars with the European 'wryneck' or *ἰynx torquilla*), or it might mean a pierced wheel that was spun rapidly on a looped thong so as to make a high-pitched whirring noise. Pindar, using poetic license, combined the two when he portrayed the hero Jason as attaching an *ἰynx*-bird to an *ἰynx*-wheel that he then employed to seduce Medea.[53]

'*Ἰynx*' comes from a root that means 'sonorous' and the whirring noise produced by the wheel lay at the center of its perceived effectiveness. The bird was also connected, through its mythic genealogy, with powerful sound (it began life as a nymph whose mother was either Echo or Persuasion).[54] The theurgists picked up on this idea: the *ἰynx-daemones* that they envisioned as

52 E.g., Pindar, *Pythian*, 4.213–19, Theocritus, *Idylls*, 2 passim—more loosely at Aeschylus, *Persae*, 988, Pindar, *Nemean*, 4.35. The verb frequently used of the *ἰynx*'s effect is that it 'draws,' or 'drags' (ἕλκω) desired people closer (e.g., Pindar, *Nemean*, 4.35, Theocritus. *Idylls*, 2 passim.).

53 Pindar, *Pythian*, 4. 213–19.

54 See Sarah Iles Johnston, "The Song of the *Iynx*: Magic and Rhetoric in *Pythian* 4," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 125 (1995): 177–206. (This article also includes references to all uses of the word outside of theurgic sources that I was able to find in ancient literature.)

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traveling between the upper and lower portions of the cosmos are described as whirring or whistling (ῥοιζέω) through the air, down from the noetic realm into the life-giving womb of Hecate and then whirring from there into the material realm.[55] It is possible that these sonorous *daemones* were also associated with the 'music of the spheres' that Platonists felt was essential to the ongoing harmony of the cosmos.[56]

The ability of the *ἰynx-daemones* to pass freely across otherwise impermeable boundaries between strata of the cosmos was crucial to their tasks. Either as transmitters of the Ideas or as the Ideas themselves,[57] the *ἰynges* used the noetic force of the Father to give form to the previously inchoate material world; they helped to 'regulate' the cosmos by continually going back and forth, binding together the different realms. In this role, they were compared by exegetes of the *Oracles* to the ferrymen-*daemones* that Plato described at length in the *Symposium*, who were charged with transmitting messages, prayers, oracles and the like between humans and gods.[58] According to Synesius, the *ἰynx-daemones* played an important role in sustaining cosmic *sympatheia* more generally.[59] The *ἰynx-daemones*, then, enacted—even epitomized—certain principles of Platonic metaphysics. Transforming what was once a love-charm into this loftier entity was a bold move, but it made a certain sense: what better to guarantee the integrity of the cosmos than an irresistible force of attraction? It was for similar reasons that Iamblichus chose to call *sympatheia* by the name of *philia*—'affection.'

When the theurgists used *ἰynges* to work upwards—that is, to invoke an entity from a higher realm into the material world—they employed this tool. Psellus gives us the most detailed description of how this was done, explaining that the theurgists made 'indiscriminate sounds' or 'sounds like an animal,'

55 *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 37.1–2 and 8–9. Cf. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 97–100, 104–8 and 122. Chaldean Hecate herself is described by Damascius as 'sending forth a life-giving whir (ῥοίζημα) (*Dubitationes et Solutiones*, 11.154.18 [Ruelle]). *Iynges* are also described as 'whirling' or 'rushing,' which seems to reflect the motion of the *ἰynx*-wheel: e.g., *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 76, 77, 87 and Proclus, *In Cratylus*, 74.26; cf. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 133–4; Cremer, *Die chaldäischen Orakel und Jamblich*, 73–74 and Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 93.

56 Discussion at Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 101–2, and Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 250.

57 Above n. 38.

58 *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 76, 77, 78; Damascius, *Dubitationes et Solutiones*, 11.201.3–4 and cf. 1.286.9; Proclus, *In Cratylus*, 33.14 and *In Prarmenides*, 1199.33–9; Plato, *Symposium*, 202e3. Discussion at Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 90–92, 103–6.

59 Synesius, *On Dreams*, 132c.

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and laughed as they caused the *ynges* to whip through the air.[60] The theurgists also called these *ynx*-wheels 'Hecate's tops' (στροφάλοι), which suggests a nod both to Hecate's long-standing role as a goddess of magic and to her then more-recent equation with the theurgic Cosmic Soul, through whom various commodities were transmitted from the noetic realm to the material world and vice versa (including the *ynges* themselves, as I noted above).[61] Damascius adds that 'being whirled inward, [the *ynx*-wheel] calls forth the gods; outwardly, it sends them away.'[62] The second part of this statement suggests that the theurgists were not always as submissive to the gods as Iamblichus would have us believe, and a fragment that may come from the *Chaldean Oracles* is even blunter: Hecate says to her human listeners that, 'easily drawing these unwilling [gods] from the aether by means of secret *ynges*, you lead them earthward.'[63] Apparently, the *ynges* could call down rain as well, if we believe the story that Marinus told about Proclus, mentioned above.

The theurgists, then, innovated upon the well-known way in which a *ynx* could be used by *magoi* to seduce a mortal lover not only by making the wheel into a cosmogonic *daemon*, but also by assigning to the wheel itself a new purpose: formerly, it had been used to draw unwilling people towards their seducers, but in theurgy it guaranteed that even hesitant divinities would heed the calls of humans. This is where the line between wheel and *daemon* really began to blur. Although no ancient author expressly states that whirling the *ynx*-wheel set an *ynx-daemon* into motion to carry a request from human to god, cumulatively the evidence points in this direction: in particular, the fact that the *ynx-daemones* are compared to Plato's *daemones* suggests they carry messages and requests in both directions.[64] Notably, *ynges* were also called *symbola* or *synthemata* by the theurgists—that is, they were among a larger group of animals, objects and sounds in the material world that could be manipulated by the theurgist in order to facilitate contact with a god, as we

60 Making unusual sounds during invocations is attested in the magical papyri as well; the theurgists may have again been adapting existing practices to their own uses.

61 Psellus, *Exegesis of the Chaldean Oracles* = *PG* 122, 1133 a3-b4; now in Psellus, *Philosophica Minora*, vol. 1 opusc. 38.

62 Damascius *Dubitationes et Solutationes*, 11.95.15.

63 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. dub. 223. The fragment is taken from Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* v.8.6, a quotation from Porphyry's *On the Philosophy of Oracles* (Smith, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, fr. 347); cf. Nicephorus Gregoras, *PG*, 149, 604a–b). Further on the use of *ynx*-wheels to invoke gods, Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 98–101.

64 Cf. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 250; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 9; Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, chapter 7.

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will see.[65] Their symbolic properties probably lay in the whirring noises they made—which one ancient source tells us could be 'tuned' or 'harmonized' in order to enhance contact with the gods.[66]

4.2 Phôtagôgia

Almost everything that theurgists sought to accomplish depended upon direct contact with a god or some other higher entity (*angeloi, archangeloi*, etc.). Such contact was called *sustasis* (σύστασις, literally 'standing together' with the entity) or sometimes *autopsia* (αὐτοψία, a 'face-to-face vision' of the god). Both terms and their cognates are found in the magical papyri as well as in theurgic sources, which underscores the high degree to which theurgists shared methods with practitioners from whom they formally separated themselves.

Because theurgic entities were fiery and filled with light, a more precise term for bringing on *sustasis* with one of them was 'leading in the light'—*phôtagôgia* (φωταγωγία).[67] The very presence of such divine light conferred benefits. Iamblichus tells us that:

> when the gods impart their light, that which is evil and demonic vanishes … the gods' light bestows on the theurgists every virtue, causes them to become orderly and well-mannered in the behavior, liberates them from passions and disordered movements, and purifies them from atheistic and unholy conduct.[68]

Such psychic improvements paved the way for the soul later to be able to ascend. There were more immediately practical benefits as well, however. When a fiery divinity was present, he or she could convey information—and in fact, it was *only* when divine light was present that theurgists considered such information to be trustworthy. The *Oracles* warn against using most other means of divination, such as *haruspicina*, because they were either empty of meaning (the 'props of commercial fraud') or might be manipulated by demons and

65 *Iynges* as *symbola*: the evidence is strong, but indirect and depends on context; discussion and citations at Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 132–34; Geudtner, *Die Seelenlehre*, 45–46; Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 104–6.

66 Philostratus *Vita Apollonii*, 1.25; the source is not explicitly theurgic, but is contemporary with the beginnings of theurgy. Discussion at Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 96–100.

67 The term itself is not found in the *Chaldean Oracles*, but is in Iamblichus *De Mysteriis*, 3.14, 133.10–11. The first scholar to treat the topic was Samson Eitrem, "Die σύστασις und der Lichtzauber in der Magie," *Symbolae Osloenses* 8 (1929): 49–53, a discussion still worth reading.

68 Iamblichus *De Mysteriis.* 3.31, 178.8–16.

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therefore convey deceptive information.[69] Iamblichus was willing to at least consider the validity of some forms of traditional divination, but he carefully explained how divine light, in one way or another, lay at the bottom of them. For example, he said that when the Pythia became overcome with *mania*, it was because her *pneuma* (a substance that ancient philosophers believed surrounded the human soul like an envelope and mediated between it and the body) had become drenched in divine light that was 'led down' into her during the preparatory rituals. When one divined by gazing into water, similarly—a practice mentioned several times in the magical papyri—Iamblichus claimed that success was due to the fact that both one's *pneuma* and the water itself had been pervaded by divine light.[70]

Divine light could also appear right in front of the theurgist. In a series of fragments from the *Oracles*, Hecate explains that gods and other beneficent entities might choose to manifest themselves in the shapes of fiery children, fiery horses, or fiery children riding on fiery horses—shooting fiery arrows from fiery bows. Higher still on the divine ladder was an epiphany shaped like a 'formless fire'—that is, a god who appeared to the theurgist looking very much like what divinity really was, according to platonic ideas. When this entity (who was probably supposed to be equated with Hecate herself) manifested itself, the theurgist was expected to pay very close attention to what it said.[71] Even in these cases, however, the theurgist had to prepare his *pneuma* before the gods arrived; if he did not, his *pneuma* would not be able to process the sight.[72]

The term *phôtagôgia* also appears several times in a spell from a fourth-century CE magical papyrus, which is entitled 'Charm for an *autopsia*' and

69 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 107; Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 3.31, 175.12–180.4.

70 Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 3.11, 126.4–128.3; 3.14, 133.13–134.15. On gazing into liquids in the magical papyri, see instances discussed in Sarah Iles Johnston, "Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination," *Arethusa* 34.1 (2001): 97–118.

71 *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 146–8 and Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, book 2 and passim. See also Sarah Iles Johnston, "*Fiat Lux, Fiat Ritus*. Divine Light and the Late Antique Defense of Ritual," *The Presence of Light: Divine Radiance and Transformative Vision*, ed. Matthew Kapstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 5–24, Johnston, "Riders in the Sky: Cavalier Gods and Theurgic Salvation in the Second Century AD," *Classical Philology* 87.4 (1992): 303–21, and Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, chapter 8; Clarke, *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis*,' chapter 6. On Proclus seeing fiery *phasmata* of Hecate, see Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 26.

72 Iamblichus specifically mentions the need for a luminous vehicle during divination at *De Mysteriis*, 3.14, 133.10, and Proclus similarly says 'those who see the gods witness them in the luminous garments of their souls (*augoeidê tôn psychôn periblemata*),' a phrase that brings us very close to the idea of the vehicle, which similarly was imagined to be wrapped around the soul. Cf. discussion at Shaw, "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification," 219–22; Finamore, "Plotinus and Iamblichus,"; John Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*. American Classical Studies 14 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 145–46.

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opens with a 'prayer for *sustasis*.'[73] But the venue through which the *phôtagôgia* occurs here is quite different from what we have seen for theurgy: the fiery divinity will enter into the room where the practitioner waits by passing through a flame produced by a lamp. Technically, this is a variation of a fairly common ritual practice called *lynchnomanteia* or 'lamp divination,' which usually involved someone gazing at the flame of a lamp until he or she saw visions (somewhat like gazing at a crystal).[74]

The papyrus spell seems to straddle the line between *lychnomanteia* and theurgic *phôtagôgia*. It improves upon the former insofar as the practitioner meets a god face-to-face instead of glimpsing only a vision in the flame, but theurgists would have considered the nature of the light involved here to be inferior to what they experienced during *phôtagôgia*. For although the lamp and its wick are specially prepared according to directions given in the spell, and although it is filled with the highest quality olive oil, these materials are all the products of human labor, and the flame that they create is therefore a human product as well. As Iamblichus tells us several times, the light that enables true divination comes from higher realms; it is the very essence of the Father himself.

4.3 *Inhaling Light*

I have mentioned that the *pneuma* of the theurgist had to be prepared to receive light before any form of *phôtagôgia* could occur, for divinatory purposes or otherwise. Because the theurgists operated on the sympathetic principle of 'like to like', this meant that if the *pneuma* were to receive fiery light, the *pneuma* already had to be somewhat fiery and filled with light itself (Iamblichus called this process making the *pneuma* '*augoeidês*,' 'looking like light').[75] Given that divine light was usually available in our world only in the form of sunlight, this would seem to present a problem—how can one incorporate sunlight into one's interior, after all?—but theurgists rose to the challenge.

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73 *PGM* IV.955, 975, 1103. The term *phôtagôgos* also appears at *PGM* V.190 but the use is metaphorical: the eyes of Helios, are asked to 'bring to light' a thief.

74 Eitrem, "Die σύστασις" and Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," 299, were the first to discuss the similarities between the theurgic procedures and the procedures of the papyri. See also Sarah Iles Johnston, "Sending Dreams, Restraining Dreams. *Oneiropompeia* in Theory and in Practice," in *Sub Imagine Somni*, ed. Christine Walde and Emma Scioli (Pisa: ETS, 2010), 1–18; Johnston, "Charming Children"; and Theodor Hopfner, "Mittel- und neugriechische Lekano- Lychno-, Katoptro- und Onychomantein," in *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1932), 218–32.

75 Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 3.11, 125.5; 3.14, 132.10; 5.26, 239.8.

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First, they posited that there was an order of *angeloi* that was in charge of helping to illuminate souls—these are perhaps the same angels whom the Emperor Julian said were under the special control of Helios, and who helped the soul of the theurgist ascend (a ritual I will discuss below, which also depended on making the *pneuma* fiery). In one fragment of the *Oracles*, it is said that this order of angels 'illuminates' the soul (φέγγουσα); in another fragment the angels are said to make it less dense (κουφιζουσα) with their warming breath.[76]

But the theurgists had their own work to do as well. Fragments 124 and 130 of the *Oracles* say that 'those who drive out the soul by inhaling are set free,' and that the souls who 'find rest in the divine' have done so by …

> … drawing in the flowering flames that descend from the Father; from these flames, as they descend, the soul plucks the soul-nourishing flower of fiery fruits.[77]

We might hazard a guess that what the fragments are advocating is inhaling sunlight (that is, sun-lit air). The picture would be closely similar to that which we find in the so-called 'Mithras Liturgy' (a spell from the same fourth-century papyrus that includes the ritual I discussed just above), in which the human who wishes to ascend to the divine realms prepares to do so in part by inhaling sunlight. At one point, the spell tells its reader: 'Draw in breath from the rays, drawing up as much as you can three times, and you will perceive that you have been lifted up and are ascending to the height …'[78]

If this guess is correct, then once again we find the theurgists putting into ritual effect their metaphysical principles: the Father's light constitutes the essence of divinity and is also the medium through which that divinity can be transmitted to the material world; to make oneself capable of interacting with the divine, one must incorporate that light. But then the theurgists had to innovate. Unless the techniques described in the 'Mithras Liturgy' are significantly older than the papyrus in which they are recorded, then as far as we know it was the theurgists who invented the rather odd, but for them completely logical, idea of inhaling light—and it would have been people we

76 *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 122 and 123; cf. Julian *Orationes*, 4.142a.

77 *Chaldean Oracles*, 130.

78 *PGM* IV.538–40. Further on these fragments and their relationship to the 'Mithras Liturgy,' see Sarah Iles Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in its Cultural Milieu," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans Kippenberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 165–94.

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call magicians, then (the ritual experts who read and/or used *PGM* IV, which includes the 'Mithras Liturgy') who adopted and adapted a theurgic technique.

4.4 Telestikê

There were yet further ways of achieving *sustasis* with the divine. One of the most important theurgic rituals—and one that was to remain famous down through the centuries, prompting discussion by Ficino and others—involved the creation of statues that gods could temporarily inhabit, speaking forth oracles from within.[79] Modern scholars usually refer to these as 'telestic statues' and refer to the process as *telestikê*,[80] although the term (or more properly *hê telestikê technê*, 'the perfecting art') actually referred to two types of rituals. The first were those in which the soul of the theurgist or its *pneuma* was perfected and thereby made ready to ascend; some of these have been discussed in the section above and more will be treated below. The second involves the statues; the concept of 'perfection' in this case refers to the fact that the physical structure into which the god will enter must become as perfectly fitting to divinity as possible. The same principle that governed the preparation of an individual human *pneuma* to experience the divine during *phôtagôgia*—'like to like'—governed the telestic endeavor as well: a statue would become capable of receiving a god if its composite ingredients were similar to the god.

This brings us to the *symbola*—those objects, words or sounds that helped to forge connections between the human and divine worlds, which the Father had 'scattered' throughout the cosmos at the time of its creation. The objects included plants, animals, minerals and other substances that could be mixed together to form the raw material from which a statue would be made. For example, in a fragment that most scholars consider to have come from the *Chaldean Oracles*, Hecate tells the theurgist to make her statue out of wild

79 The idea is also glimpsed in the Hermetic *Asclepius* as well, which dates to approximately the same time as the *Chaldean Oracles*—no surprise, given that as Garth Fowden has shown, it is fruitless to try to separate Hermeticism from theurgy too strictly (Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986]). See esp. *Asclepius* 23–24 and 38 and cf. Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, 8.22–24.

80 Very little work has been done on theurgic *telestikê*. For an in-depth treatment that offers a more complete review of ancient citations see Sarah Iles Johnston, "Animating Statues: A Case Study in Ritual" *Arethusa* 41 (2008): 445–77. Brief treatments are also available at Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," 291–95; P. Boyance, "Théurgie et télestique néoplatoniciennes," *Revue de l'historie des religions* 147 (1955): 189–209; Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 495–96; and Van Liefferinge, *La théurgie des Oracles Chaldaïques*, 88–100 (although I find that she applies the term 'telestic' too widely).

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rue, resin, myrrh, frankincense and the sort of small lizard that dwells near the house—items that were among Hecate's *symbola*.[81]

Every *symbolon* (which in effect means every object, creature or sound in the material world) belonged to a divine 'chain' that stretched from our world up into the highest realms of the cosmos. Each chain also included a god, a celestial body and certain angels, archangels, etc.[82] Proclus discusses some of these chains in his treatise *On the Hieratic Art*, noting, for instance, that the chain on which Helios was located was also the chain that included the Sun, roosters, lions, laurel trees and heliotropes, among other things.

Items on the same chain were linked to one another and therefore could affect each other. By properly manipulating a branch from a laurel tree, one could in theory make contact with Helios; by manipulating small domestic lizards, one could make contact with Hecate. One might wonder why it was necessary, therefore, to mix several *symbola* together in order to make a telestic statue, as Hecate tells the theurgist to do. Proclus' explanation was that no object or sound available in this world was alone adequate to call forth a god, because they were all too distant from the upper realms—one needed to assemble a variety of substances to make the statue sufficiently divine.[83]

One might also wonder why the theurgists needed to shape the resulting compound into a recognizable form—that is, into a statue. Why wouldn't a lump of combined materials suffice? The word that was sometimes used to designate a telestic statue, *hypodochê*, is borrowed from Plato's *Timaeus*, where it refers to the unformed material that receives the Ideas and participates in them—and by doing so, becomes the "mother" or "nurse" of generation in our world.[84] Viewed from this Platonic background, *hypodochê* is an apt term for a statue that will receive a god, but there is still no implication that such a receptacle needs to have a special, anthropomorphic form.

The ancient intellectuals who commented on theurgy were apparently uncomfortable with this requirement themselves, for they made several attempts to justify it. Porphyry insisted that it had been the gods who demanded that they be represented anthropomorphically, and that they had taught their worshippers 'what kind of figure (*schema*) should be given to their statues (*agalmata*) … and from what sort of material they should be made.'[85] But why

81 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 224.

82 See, e.g., *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 203, with commentary in Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*; Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentarii*, I.11.9 ff. and III.271.1; Psellus, *Hypostases*, 28, *PG* 76.2; now = Psellus, *Philosophica Minora*, vol. II opusc. 40.

83 *On the Hieratic Art*, 150.23–151.5; cf. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 5.23, 233,2–234.4.

84 E.g., Plato, *Timaeus*, 49a–51b.

85 Porphyry, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, fr. 316–318.

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did the gods do this? Proclus, citing a *Chaldean Oracle*, insisted that it was for our own good: 'Although we are incorporeal (*asômatoi*),' says a god, 'for your sakes bodies (*sômata*) have been bound onto our self-revealed appearances.'[86] The Emperor Julian similarly reasoned that, because humans are embodied, they are capable only of worshipping something that similarly has bodily representation—this was the reason that the gods had taught us to make statues (both telestic and non-telestic).[87] Of course, from our own vantage point we can discern another, more powerful even if unacknowledged, reason for the theurgic use of representational statues: such statues were a well-established part of traditional cult. I have been describing the theurgists as philosophers who wanted to put their beliefs into ritual effect, but I should note again that, as inhabitants of their own time and place, they naturally adopted and adapted, whenever they could, practices that carried the prestige and apparent reliability of age. Indeed, some theurgists—notably Iamblichus—went to great lengths to defend traditional practices in the face of philosophic critics.

Telestic statues were also the perfect solution to another problem to which theurgy's debt to philosophy had given rise. The idea that the cosmos was divided into discrete realms, each of which was inhabited by its own proper entities, was central to middle platonic metaphysics. Firm boundaries between realms ensured the integrity of this structure. And yet, theurgic soteriology depended on the possibility of communication, and even travel, between realms: the souls of the purified had to be able to ascend, and the gods needed to able to visit us. The telestic statue—a place within the material world where gods could properly dwell because the place was itself 'divine', in a sense—was an elegant solution that allowed the theurgists "to have their cake and eat it, too."[88]

In closing this discussion of the telestic art, I should mention that the theurgists also thought it possible to call a god into a specially prepared human being—what the theurgists called a 'receiver' (δοχεύς) and what we would call a medium. Preparations included not only making the medium as pure as possible from corporeal pollutions, but also dressing him or her in clothing marked with *eikonismata* (i.e., pictures or words that were *symbola*) and doing other things that were much like those used to prepare telestic statues.

86 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 142. Proclus, from whom we receive the fragment (Proclus, *In Platonis Rempublicam commentarii*, II.242.812) says that only the second half is actually from the *Oracles*.

87 Julian, *Frag. Epistulae*, 293b–c; Empedocles, *The Extant Fragments*, ed. and comm., M.R. Wright (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

88 For more on the theurgists as the inventers of ritualized invocation of gods into statues, Johnston, "Animating Statues: A Case Study in Ritual."

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The divine could be seen to enter and leave the medium in a fiery form. But it was difficult to find the right people to serve in this role and keep them pure; telestic statues were assumedly an easier solution.[89]

4.5 Anagôgê

The final ritual process that I will discuss was the culmination towards which all the others led: the temporary ascent (*anagôgê*, ἀναγωγή) of the theurgist's soul into the upper realms, where, like the charioteer of Plato's *Phaedrus*, it could gaze upon the beauty of the divine and further improve itself.[90] (A completely purified soul could ascend permanently after death to the angelic realm, although theurgists believed that the truly devout would choose to descend into corporality once more in order to lead other souls to blessedness.[91])

A pure *pneuma* was essential to ascent, and as I noted above, one way of accomplishing this was to make the *pneuma* as fiery and filled with light as possible, by inhaling sunlight and asking for the help of angels. But other preparations were necessary as well. On a daily basis, the theurgist had to take care not to 'defile' or 'deepen' his *pneuma* by indulging in the passions of the material world (which the *Oracles* characterized as the 'demon dogs' of Hecate in her darker role).[92] We also hear, from Psellus (who had probably read it in Proclus), that rituals to purify the *pneuma* included incantations and the manipulation of certain stones and plants, which might guess were *symbola* of the Sun—the divine agent who would be most helpful during the ascent itself.[93] Here we come very close to the rituals described in many of the ancient magical papyri.

Once the theurgist was ready to ascend, he had to turn not only his soul but his intellect to the task—which apparently meant engaging in the sort of

89 Proclus, *In Cratylus*, 100.19–25, and *In Platonis Rempublicam commentarii*, II.246.23–5; Porphyry, *Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, fr. 350; cf. Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," 295–99 and Johnston, "Charming Children."

90 More detailed discussion of ritualized ascent in Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion"; Johnston, "*Fiat Lux, Fiat Ritus*"; Bergemann, *Kraftmetaphysik und Mysterienkult*, 297–321 and 372–410.

91 On this, see Sarah Iles Johnston, "Working Overtime in the Afterlife or, No Rest for the Virtuous," in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, ed. R. Boustan and A. Reed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 85–102.

92 E.g., *Chaldean Oracles*, frs. 88–91, 104 and 105, and discussion at Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, chapter 9.

93 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 104 with comm. ad loc. in Des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, and Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*; Psell. *Exegesis of the Chaldean Oracles* = *PG* 122, 1132 a 9–12; now in Psellus, *Philosophica Minora*, vol. I opusc. 38. On the Sun as anagogically important, Julian *Orationes*, 5, 172a–173a.

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contemplative exercises that Plotinus advocated.[94] In one of the *Oracles*,[95] a god directs that:

> Clothing yourself in the full-armored force of the resounding light,
> And equipping the soul and the intellect with the three-barbed strength,
> You must cast into your mind the complete password (*synthema*) of the Triad[96] and wander
> Amongst the fiery channels not in a haphazard manner but with concentration.

The 'fiery channels' along which the soul would travel are elsewhere called 'rays,'[97] and refer to the beams of sunlight that descend from the Sun.[98]

The 'password' mentioned here is probably a verbal *symbolon* that intensifies the theurgists' connection with the god(s) who oversees the ascent, but it certainly also serves as a marker of identity. As with the passwords used in earlier Greek mystery cults, knowledge of otherwise secret words or phrases proved that the initiate had undergone training and experiences that made him deserving of the special favors the gods had to offer.[99] Apparently one password was not enough, however: as he ascended through the different strata, the theurgist had to keep pronouncing *synthemata*. The Paternal Intellect would not cooperate with the soul until it had spoken the 'pure paternal *synthema*,' for example. Again, the 'Mithras Liturgy' from the magical papyri provides a parallel insofar as that ascender must pronounce passwords each time he encounters any of the numerous ranks of divine entities that lie between him and his goal.

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94 On the importance of a contemplative as well as ritual element in ascent and the difficulty of determining precisely what the theurgists and their commentators thought on the matter, see the review of ancient materials and modern opinions at Majerick, *The Chaldea Oracles*, 30–45 and more recently Tanaseanu-Döbler, "'Nur der Weise ist Priester,'" 27–56.

95 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 2 and cf. fr. 1.

96 The "Triad" probably refers to three divine hypostases of the Father; see comments ad loc. in Des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*; Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*; and Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 192–97.

97 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 115.

98 They are the same channels as those through which the soul had originally descended into incarnation: *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 110. Cf. the 'pipes' along which the soul will ascend in the "Mithras Liturgy," 542–51, which are described as hanging down from the Sun.

99 For passwords in mystery cults, Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 46.

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There are traces of other rituals that might have helped to prepare the theurgist for psychic ascent, although it is difficult to be certain of what was done or exactly what it was intended to accomplish. Proclus says that 'in the most wondrous of all the mystic ceremonies of perfection,' the theurgist was buried up to his neck. If we are right to understand this burial as part of the preparation for ascent, then the idea seems to have been to symbolically 'kill' the body so as to facilitate the soul's release.[100] This we also hear about hymns being sung by the ascending soul.[101]

Elsewhere I have discussed the differences between the ascent rituals used by the theurgists and the author of the 'Mithras Liturgy,' and the ascent narratives found in ancient Mediterranean works such as the *Testament of Levi* (probably mid second century BCE) or the *Ascension of Isaiah* (first century CE).[102] One difference is that the main purpose of the latter is to present a theodicy or eschatological system that the ascender learns about when on high (the ascent story serves as a validating 'frame' for this information) whereas in the former, those reading or listening to the ritual instructions aspire to ascend themselves. The ascents in the latter, moreover, typically are spontaneous; figures such as Isaiah are chosen by God and 'raptured' to the heavens without needing to perform preliminary rituals. The theurgists, as we have seen, were expected to prepare themselves for ascent at great length. These differences again underscore what I have emphasized in this essay, but from a different angle: theurgic ritual grew organically out of its philosophical system, but grow it did. The theurgists were not content only to think about how the cosmos worked; they wanted to participate in those workings.

Suggested Readings

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100 Proclus, *Theol. Pl.* IV.9; ed. and comm. H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, *Théologie platonicienne: Book 5* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), 30, 17–25 with their comments (I adopt their interpretation here) and cf. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, 204–7, and Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles*, 37–8.

101 *Chaldean Oracles*, fr. 131 with Damascius' comments at *In Phaedrus*, 371, ed. L.G. Westerink and J. Combès, *Damascius. Traité des premiers principes. Tome III. De la procession de l'unifié*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002).

102 Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion."

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CHAPTER 27

Magic as the Local Application of Authoritative Tradition

David Frankfurter

If we admit a category magic, how should it be linked to a concept of religion? Can we define or use the term magic in some way that conveys an aspect of religion that is not inherently crude or derogatory?[1]

1 Ancient Magic and Ancient Religions

Since the Reformation, of course, magic and religion have been juxtaposed: as materialistic idolatry versus transcendent piety (Protestants), as distinct ways of attributing causality in the world (Frazer), as collective versus idiosyncratic contexts for rites (Durkheim, Mauss), as the quotidian and protective versus the moral and celebratory (Malinowski), and so on. In line with these older dichotomies, students of ancient religions have customarily applied "religion" to the priestly and intellectual systems associated with temples, and "magic" to popular derivations and misapplications of those systems, often selfish and personal rather than for the greater good.[2] But for the Mediterranean world of the Greco-Roman period, in the face of a veritable flood of data for magical practices (broadly imagined) and ritual specialists, the relationship of this purported world of magic to ancient or existing temple cults becomes especially confusing.

So let us begin with the august antiquarian Alphonse Barb and his two general essays on magic in the Greco-Roman world, not because they frame things with critical subtlety but because they put in graphic terms how many classical and New Testament scholars perceived magical texts and artifacts through much of the 20th century. Magic, in Barb's view, comprised the orientalized,

1 This essay represents a revised version of David Frankfurter, "The Great, the Little, and the Authoritative Tradition in Magic of the Ancient World," *ARG* 16 (2014): 11–30. With thanks to De Gruyter publishers for permission to reproduce the essay.

2 See esp. critique by Esther Eidinow, "Networks and Narratives: A Model for Ancient Greek Religion," *Kernos* 24 (2011): 21–23.

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under-rationalized, overspiced and fermented versions of classical Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Egyptian religion: in his own pungent metaphor, magic was the rotten food to the classic cults' fresh tables, "the syncretistic, rotting refuse-heap of the dead and dying religions of the whole ancient world [, which] grew to mountainous height while wholesome supernatural food became scarce."[3] This is clearly an extreme judgment, especially coming from a scholar who devoted his life to tracking down the roots of strange symbols and phrases, but it well represents the discomfort that many scholars have felt with the Greek ritual manuals and binding tablets that seem to garble and parody the beautiful paeans to gods in classical literature.

Barb's discomfort stems partly, of course, from an academic romanticism about Greece, Rome, Israel, Egypt, and other ancient kingdoms, of which magic seems like a wholesale perversion. But it also points to a cultural, religious, and even definitional problem: what *is* the relationship between the so-called "great cults" of the Mediterranean world and "magic"—an as-yet-unarticulated sphere of practice and concern? Especially given the language of gods, myths, sacrifice and altars, even ritual precision in magical texts, is it really so unimaginable to regard "magic" as a kind of parasitical and voracious growth on "religion" properly conceived, mixing and matching wantonly in order to feign authority? Even setting aside the dichotomies of Frazer, Durkheim, Malinowski, and the Protestant Reformers, we must reckon with *some* kind of cultural relationship between—in gross terms—official forms of religion and the forms represented in the magical texts and ritual materials.

This relationship has been addressed in more recent times without recourse to metaphors of rotten food, fungus, cancer, or perverted *demi-mondes*.[4] Jonathan Z. Smith proposed that, whoever the ritual experts might have been, magic involved a miniaturization of the cosmic practices and equipment of temples.[5] Others have argued for a more specific demographic overlap between

3 A.A. Barb, "The Survival of the Magic Arts," in *The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century: Essays*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 101–4 (quotation at 104); Compare idem, "Mystery, Myth, and Magic," in *The Legacy of Egypt*, ed. J.R. Harris (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 155, 159–60 (magic as "a cancerous growth in the body of Egyptian religion").

4 Fungus: Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 2; *demi-mondes*: Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 81, 105, passim.

5 Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 13–27. Cf. Sarah Iles Johnston, "Sacrifice in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Magic and Ritual Power in the Ancient World*, ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin W. Meyer, RGRW 141 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 344–58; Joachim F. Quack,

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the authorities of temples—or churches, or rabbinic Judaism—and the ritual specialists writing magical texts. These scribal religious experts adapted their official traditions for private purposes, either as a covert side-business, *or* as a way of maintaining authoritative tradition after religious institutions were in decline, *or* as a perfectly legitimate and traditional extension of official ritual practices.[6]

But framing the issue in the broader terms of "authoritative tradition"—rather than specific historical links to specific historical cults—allows us to focus on a particular thematic feature running across the textual and archaeological data for magic: not so much the influence of but rather the *appeal to* some religious authority. This is something we see in the use of gods' names, mythic *historiolae*, citations or imitations of scripture, or even genres like liturgy or epistle. All of these media in some way implied authority in ritual context. Taking the term "authority" as a quality of social role or charisma that is constructed from tradition (often institutional), we should look at the formation of authoritative tradition in magic as a creative, *ad hoc* performance—in any medium—that oscillates expertly between two poles: on the one hand, the immediate, the idiosyncratic, even the subversive context; and, on the other, a sense for what might constitute authoritative tradition in that place and time, as administered by a particular agent. That is, authoritative tradition is both an *image* cultivated in the local milieu and an institution's or temple's active effort to influence the local milieu.

The larger goal of this chapter is to explore the value and parameters of the category magic when this category is used to describe, not private or idiosyncratic ritual or material transmissions of power, but rather *the invocation and deployment of an authoritative tradition in a local performative context through the creative agency of a ritual expert and involving various ritual media*. What is gained if we maintain this sense of "magic"—what dimensions of religion can be highlighted, what dynamics of ritual understood?

"Miniaturisierung als Schlüssel zum Verständnis römerzeitlicher ägyptscher Rituale?," in *Ritual Dynamics and Religious Change in the Roman Empire*, ed. Olivier Hekster, Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner, and Christian Witschel, Impact of Empire 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), 349–66.

6 See David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians,'" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 167–70; David Frankfurter, "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors," *ARG* 2, no. 2 (2000): 162–94; Jacco Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual, 100–300 CE*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005); Robert K. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice Under the Roman Empire: The Demotic Spells and Their Religious Context," *ANRW* II.18.5 (1995): 3333–79.

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The goal of this chapter, then is not to distinguish magic *a priori* from other aspects of religion but to develop parameters for the use of the term magic that address a particular aspect of ritual expertise in the local domain, when broad religious systems are interpreted and performed as authoritative tradition for local circumstances.

2 The Redfield Model: Great Tradition ↔ Little Tradition

A particularly useful way to frame authoritative tradition and, indeed, magic itself as a kind of local orientation of authoritative tradition, is in terms of Robert Redfield's classic heuristic dichotomy of the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition.[7] But many have misrepresented or overly reified these categories, so it is worth explaining them.

What Redfield calls the Great Tradition refers to the systematized form of a religion, developed and maintained by an institution of—usually literate—religious specialists: a kind of priesthood. The Great Tradition involves an institution and hierarchy that knows the religion, writes it out, sustains its central cults, and *from which* certain texts, rituals, charms, images, and even domestic practices will draw their authority. The Little—or what is better rephrased as the *local*—Tradition involves the "village sphere" of religion, revolving around *local* understandings of landscape, society, agriculture, legends of identity, and the various immediate exigencies of life, from fertility to rivalry.

It is important to recognize that, in actual practice, these two traditions are in perpetual dialectic, such that one can really only pick up differences by comparison: say, the local Jewish world of the demon-protection bowls from Iraq by comparison with the systematizing world projected in the Babylonian Talmud. And while all premodern (and most modern) cultures have some sort of local tradition of religious organization and meaning, it can sometimes be hard to perceive on the basis of historical documents without the benefit of some model, like Redfield's, to direct us to the subtle dimensions of local religion. In antiquity we notice such local devotion in the recent excavations of local springs, like that of Anna Perenna in Rome and the cave of the nymphs in Corinth, and in hagiographical depictions of religious practices peculiar to a

7 See Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1956), applied to forms of Egyptian religion in the Roman period in Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 97–98.

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village or group of homes: the *Life of St. Martin*, for example, which describes a local village martyr shrine in fourth-century Gaul that Martin has destroyed.[8] Much of the data for religious practice to which we are accustomed reflects local expressions of some Great Tradition or attempts to render some local cult in terms of some great tradition.

As Redfield also points out, there may be several "Great Traditions" in play, as in post-conquest Latin America or modern India between Sanskritic Hinduism and Islam.[9] In fact, for our purposes in the ancient world, it would do Redfield's model no violence to imagine a potential *multiplicity* of such authoritative traditions, from a current, hegemonic Great Tradition (e.g., Roman priestly institutions in second-century Gaul) to alternate or exotic Great Traditions (e.g., the Mithras or Christ cult in second-century Gaul).[10] All these would signify authority and system in the world of the Local Tradition, but differently in each local world.

This dichotomy resembles (and may have partly inspired) Jonathan Z. Smith's categories of the (domestic) religion of "Here" and the (cult) religion of "There," although Redfield emphasized the *textuality* of the Great Tradition and, recognizing the interpenetration of small communities, a broader cultural territory for the Local Tradition. Smith's categories allowed the framing of a hybrid and dynamic intermediary phenomenon, the religion of "Everywhere" that partakes symbolically of both poles.[11] In the same way, the interests of the Redfield school—Srinivas and Marriott in India, Scott in Southeast Asia, Sallnow in Peru, Christian in Spain, Redfield himself in Mexico, and many others—have lain not in the *reification* of the Great/Local dichotomy but in the dialectic: how (for example) the invariably literate specialists of the Great Tradition draw upon local gods of the Local Tradition and systematize them in literature or cult, and how the ritual specialists of the Local Tradition—often seers or shamans—reinterpret the authoritative gods of the Great Tradition

8 See, e.g., David Jordan, "Inscribed Lamps from a Cult at Corinth in Late Antiquity," *HTR* 87, no. 2 (1994): 223–29; Marina Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón, RGRW 168 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 191–213; Jürgen Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 215–44. Legend of St. Martin: Sulpicius Severus, *Life of Martin*. 11.

9 Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*.

10 On the interaction of such traditions (without direct use of the Redfield model), see Ton Derks, *Gods, Temples, and Religious Practices: The Transformation of Religious Ideas and Values in Roman Gaul*, Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 2 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998).

11 Jonathan Z. Smith, "Here, There, and Anywhere," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jonathan Z. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 323–39.

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for relevance in the local domain.[12] In the dialectic we see the localized forms of Isis or Mary and the "scripturalized" forms of Sobek or Santo Niño de Atocha or San la Muerte or Saint Guinefort, the thirteenth-century French healing dog.[13] In this dialectic we can see both the agency of the Local Tradition and its charismatic specialists *and* the perceived authority of the Great Tradition and its literate specialists and media. And, as Redfield demonstrated in his classic study of the Yucatan, it is cities where we have the most complex, even competitive representations of both Great and Local traditions. But overall, it is the "Great-ness," as it were, of a religious tradition that gives it authority and that allows a ritual object, word, name, or verse to imply a larger authoritative *system* behind it.

So in this perspective, magic would amount to *the ritual or material context in which a Great Tradition* (*that may or may not be associated with living cults or temples*) *is interpreted by a ritual expert, located in time and space, and linked with particular social circumstances*: e.g., a rivalry, an illness, a fear—that is, mediated into the immediate circumstances of the Local Tradition.

For those who work on Christian ritual practices this model—ritual or talismanic authority based in a Great Tradition—is immediately recognizable in the perennial migration of institutionally sanctioned substances and equipment, like oil, holy water, Eucharists, relics, and statuary, from ecclesiastical to domestic zones. Sometimes this movement is facilitated by official ritual specialists, like priests, monks, and minor clerics.[14] Often, as we know from medieval legends around Eucharistic magic, their appropriation is the work of maverick local ritual specialists.[15] But the function of the substances and

12 Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of the Yucatan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941); McKim Marriott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization," in *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*, ed. McKim Marriott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 171–222; James C. Scott, "Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition," *Theory and Society* 4 (1977): 1–38, 211–46; M.N. Srinivas, *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); Michael J. Sallnow, *Pilgrims of the Andes: Regional Cults in Cusco* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1987); William A. Christian, *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

13 Santo Niño and San la Muerte: see the exemplary study by Frank Graziano, *Cultures of Devotion: Folk Saints of Spanish America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children Since the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

14 See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), 25–50, 177–279; Edina Bozóky, "Les moyens de la protection privée," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales* 8 (2001): 175–92.

15 Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 187–90, 223–32.

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equipment is the same: to establish and direct the authoritative power associated with a Great Tradition for quotidian, domestic, erotic, even subversive purposes. It is important to recognize that magic is not the *mis*use or *mis*understanding of these materials but simply their use *outside of* their institutional setting as potent symbols of authoritative tradition.

While to Barb the literature of Greco-Roman and late antique magic seemed to invent, distort, or otherwise depart entirely from the Great Traditions of the Mediterranean world (that is, cultivated and developed among temples), in fact the data shows ritual specialists' regular verbal or material gestures to a Great Tradition—an official or well-known god and his cult. By way of example, the Greek ritual manuals from Roman Egypt include three parallel texts for ritual procedures to gain a dream-vision of the folk-god Bes.[16] Now, Bes was as much a god of the Local Tradition as you could get in Egypt, deeply rooted in folk culture yet deftly worked into official temple texts and iconography as well.[17] How interesting, then, that these PGM spells involve esoteric references to Bes's attendance by Osiris's body, suggesting some kind of scribal systematization—that is, with a Great Tradition—in the sense of Bes's (re)integration with priestly Osiris traditions through the agency of priests. And, in fact, these ritual texts were circulating at the same time as a major oracle cult of Bes at Abydos that developed from an older oracle cult of Osiris, the work of a literate priesthood and its mythological systematization, all evidence of an effort to form an institution, a Great Tradition of sorts. Indeed, that very systematization led to the shrine's imperial closure in the fourth century CE.[18] Thus what might appear entirely "local" or "invented" tradition in popular ritual can often involve the mediation of a respected Great Tradition like a major oracle cult.

Clearly the representation of authority in magical texts can be deceptive. Is the text invoking a local or a great god? Does the language reflect what would

16 *PGM* VII.222–49; VIII.64–110; CII.1–17.

17 See in general Michel Malaise, "Bes et les croyances solaires," in *Studies in Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*, ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 680–729; Jan Assmann, "Magic and Theology in Ancient Egypt," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg, Studies in the History of Religion 75 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 1–18.

18 Imperial closure: Ammianus Marcellinus 19.12. In general on aspects of the Bes oracle see David Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician'," in *Envisioning Magic*, 122–25; Françoise Dunand, "La consultation oraculaire en Égypte tardive: L'Oracle de Bès à Abydos," in *Oracles et prophéties dans l'antiquité: Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 15–17 Juin 1995*, ed. Jean-Georges Heintz (Paris: De Boccard, 1997), 65–84; David Frankfurter, "Voices, Books, and Dreams: The Diversification of Divination Media in Late Antique Egypt," in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter T. Struck, RGRW 155 (Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2005), 238–43.

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have been read or heard in temple context or rather the speech of a local seer? How do we discriminate and describe the representations of authority that lie in-between? This essay tries to make sense of the ancient materials by examining, first, the ways in which iconographic and written and oral genres communicate the authority of the Great Tradition. Then I will turn to two cases in which a Great Tradition is presumed, even projected, despite the non-existence of any scribal or cultic institution.

3 The Great Tradition in Iconographic Media

Iconography itself is one of the principal contexts for the mediation of a Great Tradition in the local domain and for the promotion of the Local Tradition in media or frameworks sanctioned by the Great Tradition. A local god is painted with the head-dress or accoutrements of a principal temple god; the Virgin Mary is celebrated in her local appearance with smoke-darkened face, holding a familiar local bird. But approximations or innovations of official iconographic schemes will often carry a magical efficacy into their new contexts, a concentration or miniaturization of the authority of the Great Tradition in the intimate world of the local tradition.

There are many ways to construct a sense of authority or efficacy in visual media such that an object carries this kind of magical potency. Through attributes like crowns or animals, bodily features, distinctive gestures and clothing, and simply workshops' spatial proximity to a central shrine a craftsman or scribe can indicate that a figure on an amulet, stela, or other medium represents a deity recognized as authoritative and potent. For example, the widely distributed oil ampullae from the (Christian) cult of St. Menas, near Alexandria, Egypt (V–VIII CE), displayed a crude image of St. Menas himself standing in *orans* position between two camels, molded into either or both sides of the vessel. That image seems to have corresponded to a "master" icon, quite likely in mosaic, that visitors could behold at the basilica. Far from that basilica, the efficacy of that oil and the ampulla itself derived from the assemblage's iconographic capacity to point to an authoritative master or source.[19]

In another example, from earlier antiquity, one of the most distinctive magical iconographies in the Greco-Roman world was the Horus *cippus*: a stone or

19 See discussions of artifacts and iconography in Christian Cannuyer, "Saint Mina aux chameaux: Autour des origines d'un iconotype copte," *Le monde copte* 27/28 (1997): 139–54; Zsolt Kiss, *Les ampoules de saint Ménas découvertes à Kōm El-Dikka (1961–1981)*, Alexandrie 5 (Warsaw: PWN, 1989).

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wood stela that depicted the god Harpocrates (Horus in child form) in frontal position, standing on crocodiles and holding in his hands a selection of "Sethian" beasts (deemed chaotic and unlucky in Egyptian priestly tradition), like snakes, scorpions, and antelopes.[20] In the earliest examples (first millennium BCE), the rest of the stela—usually in stone—would be covered with hieroglyphic spells adjuring the power of poison; and the stela might sit on a stone base above a small pool, to catch water that had been poured over the object and thus impregnated with the incantations themselves.[21] Presumably these stelae stood in temple precincts and thus indicated both spatially and materially the authority of Harpocrates as a royal god administered through the temple institution. In later examples, from the early Roman period (and often in wood), the hieroglyphic writing had become entirely gratuitous, while the image of Harpocrates (with a mask of Bes above him) became the preeminent, apotropaic representation on the stelae.[22]

Through the Hellenistic period we see an increasing inclination on the part of workshops to craft small, probably domestic versions of the Horus *cippus*. And gemstone artisans appropriated this same authoritative iconography for more portable amulets, improvising with the depiction of the child Horus (or even another, hybrid god) or the placement of the animals he dominated for

20 Over the history of the cippi and those materials (like gems) inspired by their iconography it remains ambiguous whether Harpocrates (or whichever god is central) repels the dangerous fauna or gains apotropaic power by assimilating their characteristics. The latter interpretation is the insight of Jan Quaegebeur, "Divinités égyptiennes sur des animaux dangereux," in *L'animal, l'homme, le dieu dans le proche-orient ancien: Actes du colloque de Cartigny 1981*, ed. Philippe Borgeaud, Yves Christe, and Ivanka Urio (Louvain: Peeters, 1985), 131–43.

21 See Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 46–48, drawing on important studies by Pierre Lacau, "Les Statues 'guérisseuses' dans l'ancienne Égypte," *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Commission de la Fondation Piot, Monuments et mémoires* 25 (1921): 189–209; Keith C. Seele, "Horus on the Crocodiles," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6 (1947): 43–52; Adolf Klasens, *Magical Statue Base* (*Socle Behague*) *in the Museum of Antiquities at Leiden* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1952); Robert K. Ritner, "Horus on the Crocodiles: A Juncture of Religion and Magic in Late Dynastic Egypt," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. James P. Allen (New Haven, CT: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1989), 103–16; Heike Sternberg-El Hotabi, *Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Horusstelen: ein Beitrag zur Religionsgeschichte Ägyptens im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 62 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999); Annie Gasse, *Les stèles d'Horus sur les crocodiles* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 2004). See also above, Frankfurter, Chapter 23.

22 Heike Sternberg-El Hotabi, "Der Untergang der Hieroglyphenschrift: Schriftverfall und Schrifttod im Ägypten der griechisch-römischen Zeit," *Chronique d'Égypte* 69 (1994): 218–45.

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apotropaic effect.[23] With this iconography the gemstones become surrogates of a well-known magical image. Thus, over the Greco-Roman period, representations of the *cippus* might be manufactured in a variety of workshops (in and beyond Egypt), for a variety of domestic and local uses, and with a range of skills and adherence to original details. But in their traditional iconography—frontal depiction of the child Horus amidst dangerous fauna—the *cippi* and the gems always beckoned towards priestly traditions about Harpocrates and his powers. It is in that beckoning towards a Great Tradition (or some sort of authoritative tradition) of Egyptian temple mythology that the apotropaic Horus *cippus* iconography offered magical power rather than in the arrangement of symbols *per se*.

Whereas both the Horus *cippus* and the St. Menas ampules invoked the authority of specific shrines and/or institutional iconographies, miniature versions of the central bull-slaying image in the Mithraic ritual chambers invoked an iconography standardized across the Roman Empire that seems in itself to have sustained Mithraism.as a Great Tradition. One of the remarkable features of Mithraism is its utter lack of textual remains, making scholars dependent on artifacts, inscriptions, and iconography to make sense of the religious movement. The iconography of Mithras slaying the bull, which occupied a central position in every known Mithraeum, has clear astrological significance, suggesting that ceremonies before it must have celebrated some connection with the cosmos.[24] But what purpose would the miniatures have had? Private devotions apart from the Mithraeum? Votive offerings? Many miniature depictions deviate from the standard iconography in important ways and seem to have functioned as private devotional objects, in many cases in an amuletic or protective capacity.[25] But then what kind of efficacy would this iconography have carried in miniature form, outside of the ritual chambers? Christopher Faraone has argued that the bull-slaying iconography itself seems to have derived from an apotropaic visual assemblage well-known (but widely improvised) in the

23 See, e.g., Simone Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum*, ed. Peter and Hilde Zazoff, 2 vols. (London: British Museum Press, 2001); Attilio Mastrocinque, *Les intailles magiques du département des Monnaies, Medailles et Antiques* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2014). See also above, Dasen and Nagy, Chapter 17, section 3.1.

24 Manfred Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras: The God and His Mysteries*, trans. Richard Gordon (New York: Routledge, 2000), 78–90; Roger Beck, "Reading Iconography as Narrative," in *Religion: Narrating Religion*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston, Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks: Religion (Farmington Hills, MI: Cengage/Macmillan Reference USA, 2017), 177–90.

25 See esp. Richard Gordon, "Small and Miniature Reproductions of the Mithraic Icon: Reliefs, Pottery, Ornaments and Gems," in *Roman Mithraism: The Evidence of the Small Finds*, ed. Marleen Martens and Guy De Boe (Brussells: Museum het Toreke, 2004), 259–83.

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ancient world: the so-called "suffering-eye" image.[26] Faraone's proposal would imply that the miniature images of the Mithraic tauroctony for apotropaic purposes were both reflecting the essential iconography of the Mithraic Great Tradition (such as we could imagine this constituted iconographically) and revitalizing the original function of the bull-slaying image. In any case, like the Menas ampules and the amuletic or crude images of Horus on the crocodiles, the miniature Mithras images draw upon "official" iconography, from a Great Tradition, though constituted differently in each case—to offer apotropaic protection in their local, domestic, or private environments.

4 The Great Tradition in the Interface Between the Written and the Oral

Perhaps no gesture, no medium, in the ancient Mediterranean world more immediately pointed toward authoritative tradition than writing itself– or the pretense that a charm derived from writing. The charisma of the written word in the semi-literate culture is one of the singular theoretical observations of the anthropologist Jack Goody. Goody's paradigmatic examples are Egyptian hieroglyphs, which naturally oscillated in function between talismanic efficacy and alphabetic functionality, as well as the amuletic use of Qur'an in northern Africa, worn and even steeped in water for ritual consumption.[27] (The magic of writing *per se* is discussed in Chapter 23, above.)

But writing, or sacred writing, also involved an intrinsic gesture to a religious tradition identified with that writing.[28] The efficacy of the Qur'anic suras written on tablets and washed off for drinking derived not only from the nature of the written word but also from the mediation that the specific lines of Arabic provided *between* the Great Tradition and the Local Tradition—as concentrations of the cosmic authority of the true religion, Islam, and the materialized word of the God it reveals. Hebrew provided a similar charismatic symbolism:

26 Christopher Faraone, "The Amuletic Design of the Mithraic Bull-Wounding Scene," *Journal of Roman Studies* 103 (2013): 96–116; Katherine M.D. Dunbabin and M.W. Dickie, "*Invida Rumpantur Pectora*: The Iconography of *Phthonos/Invidia* in Graeco-Roman Art," *JAC* 26 (1983): 7–37.

27 See Jack Goody, "Restricted Literacy in Northern Ghana," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 198–264; Abdullahi Osman El-Tom, "Drinking the Koran: The Meaning of Koranic Verses in Berti Erasure," *Africa* 55 (1985): 414–31.

28 Marcello Carastro, "Les liens de l'écriture: *Katadesmoi* et instances de l'enchaînement," in *Architecturer l'invisible: Autels, ligatures, écritures*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses 138 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 263–91.

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not just holy writing in general but writing that drew its power from a Great Tradition—an image of Judaism: phrases from scripture or recalling biblical materials, angelic or other divine names. This is not to imply that a Judaism existed in the Greco-Roman period in any monolithic or governing sense, only that the *idea* or *notion* of a systematic codification of Jewish tradition existed, whether based in priesthoods, Torah, or heaven, such that Jews, non-Jews, and everyone else would imagine some substance to a Great Tradition of the Jews. And Hebrew letters, names, and scripture verses—as in the *tefillin*—served as symbols of that tradition, their magical efficacy due to the letters' and sounds' mediation of a Great Tradition that suggested priests and books and cult.[29] Jewish "magic," as it were, involved the mediation of scriptural authority into everyday life through the medium of writing.[30]

The Jesus movement, as an extension of Judaism, also imbued text with a charisma that gestured towards the distinctive powers of an authoritative tradition that in turn sanctioned Christian power and authority. The early Christian evidence shows a concerted effort (by the third century) to produce a Christian "scripture magic" through (a) the expansion of *nomina sacra*, a scribal technique for amplifying the symbolism of divine names;[31] (b) the amuletic use of Christian texts, like gospel verses and *incipit*s, and even (as Chrysostom describes) miniature gospel books;[32] and (c), by the fifth century,

29 On *tefillin*, see Yehudah B. Cohn, *Tangled Up In Text:* Tefillin *and the Ancient World*, Brown Judaic Studies 351 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008). On the concept of a Jewish authoritative tradition—albeit mutable and regional—current in the Roman and late antique world, independent of Jewish ritualists, and regularly drawn into magical materials: see, e.g., Giancarlo Lacerenza, "Jewish Magicians and Christian Clients in Late Antiquity: The Testimony of Amulets and Inscriptions," in *What Athens has to do with Jerusalem: Essays on Classical, Jewish, and Early Christian Art and Archaeology in Honor of Gideon Foerster*, ed. Leonard V. Rutgers (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 393–419; Lynn R. LiDonnici, "'According to the Jews': Identified (and Identifying) 'Jewish' Elements in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Heavenly Tablets: Interpretation, Identity and Tradition in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Lynn R. LiDonnici and Andrea Lieber (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 87–108.

30 On the notion of a Jewish authoritative or Great Tradition as deployed in magic, see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 291–350.

31 See in general Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 26–48; Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 95–134.

32 E.A. Judge, "The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri," in *Perspectives on Language and Text*, ed. E.W. Conrad and E.G. Newing (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 339–49; Michael J. Kruger, "P. Oxy. 840: Amulet or Miniature Codex?," *JTS* 53, no. 1 (2002): 81–94; Theodore de Bruyn, "Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca, and Tablets Written with Biblical Texts in Greek and Used as Amulets: A Preliminary List," in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas

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the imitation of *liturgy* to convey performative efficacy.[33] In all these cases the magic of the written medium and of its associated gestures and ritual expertise could be seen as an appeal to a greater—scriptural—authority—to something larger and more cosmic than the immediate world of the ritual expert. Here were carefully selected verses from the powerful texts of the Christians, the distinctive hand gestures and imprecations of the Christians, and a specialist who claimed expertise in the lore and secrets of the Christians. The use of Christian writing—or writing meant to symbolize Christianity—itself functioned as an appeal to a kind of Great Tradition.[34]

Scripture magic thus serves as a charismatic medium of a Great Tradition, both in the the "performance" of the scribal ritual expert who delivers efficacious passages of scripture and in the client's encounter and use. The efficacy of scripture, and even of writing designed to approximate or recall scripture, depends on the power and authority of some broader religious context that dictates scripture as its medium: a Great Tradition of Christianity. But as with Judaism, the conjuring of this Great Tradition through such local performative media should not imply an historically monolithic or coherent religious system, only the appearance and authority of such a tradition imagined through the medium of the amulet. A Great Tradition is always a mythic idea, even if sustained institutionally.

But how far, we may ask, can local improvisation *deviate* from official formulae, or from the central legends and scriptures of a Great Tradition, yet still invoke and draw authority from a Great Tradition? For this question it is helpful to examine the ritual speech genre called the *historiola*, in which a healing, protective, or curse act is completed by verbal reference to a paradigmatic narrative of crisis and resolution. Many *historiolae* seem to play fast and loose with authoritative tradition, with characters and stories entirely unrelated to

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(Leiden; Boston: E.J. Brill, 2010), 145–89; Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). Miniature gospels as amulets: Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Statues* 19.14.

33 On the imitation of liturgy in practical and healing ritual see esp. Theodore de Bruyn, "The Use of the Sanctus in Christian Greek Papyrus Amulets," *Studia Patristica* 40 (2006): 15–19, and more generally de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), chap. 6; and David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), chap. 6.

34 See Walter M. Shandruk, "Christian Use of Magic in Late Antique Egypt," *JECS* 20, no. 1 (2012): 31–57; Joseph E. Sanzo, "The Innovative Use of Biblical Traditions for Ritual Power: The Crucifixion of Jesus on a Coptic Exorcistic Spell (Brit. Lib. Or. 6796[4], 6796) as a Test Case," *ARG* 16 (2014): 67–98. See also above, Van der Vliet, Chapter 14.

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scripture or official legends. The following examples are from early Christian Egypt, but *historiolae* have been widely discussed for medieval and modern Europe as well as ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece.[35] The heroes of *historiolae* are implicitly those recognized locally as paradigmatic of human experience—e.g., they can suffer—but who are capable through their supernatural powers or ability to invoke supernatural aid—e.g., to gain resolution from suffering.

Modern scholars have analyzed this kind of magical speech in terms of typology, performative efficacy, ritual context, and evolution over time and space. But it is important to consider the nature of their heroes as derivations from and symbols of a Great Tradition—even when they may not be entirely recognizable, as with Isis and Horus in the oft-discussed Philinna papyrus: "[The most majestic goddess' child] was set / Aflame as an initiate—and on / The highest mountain peak was set aflame—/ And fire did greedily gulp] seven springs / Of wolves, seven of bears, seven of lions, / But seven dark-eyed maidens with dark urns / Drew water and becalmed the restless fire."[36] Neither the "child" nor the "maidens" are named here; and yet they function as references, crystallizations of "official" traditions and their mythic heroes that would have been recognizable as Egyptian—if only in a general sense. That is to say, the efficacy of the verses stems from their reflection of Egyptian authoritative tradition about Isis and Horus.

Berlin 8313a is another typical *historiola* (quoted earlier, Chapter 22):

> [O holy] of holies, unshakable, indestructible rock! Child of the maiden, firsborn [of your father] and mother! Jesus our Lord came walking

35 On *historiolae* in Egyptian magic, see Jørgen Podemann Sørensen, "The Argument in Ancient Egyptian Magical Formulae," *Acta Orientalia* 45 (1984): 5–19; Thomas Schneider, "Die Waffe der Analogie. Altägyptische Magie als System," in *Das Analogiedenken: Vorstöße in ein neues Gebiet der Rationalitätsforschung*, ed. Karen Gloy and Manuel Bachmann (Freiburg: Alber, 2000), 37–85; David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical Historiola in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 457–76; Edina Bozóky, *Charmes et prières apotropaïques*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 86 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Lea Olsan, "Charms in Medieval Memory," in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. Jonathan Roper (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 59–88; Jonathan Roper, "Typologising the English Charm," in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, 128–44. See also above, Frankfurter, Chapter 22.

36 *PGM* XX.4–10, tr. *GMPT*, 258–59. On the mythological references in this text see Christopher Faraone, "The Mystodokos and the Dark-Eyed Maidens: Multicultural Influences on a Late-Hellenistic Incantation," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 297–333; Robert K. Ritner, "The Wives of Horus and the Philinna Papyrus (PGM XX)," in *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years*, ed. Willy Clarysse, Antoon Schoors, and Harco Willems, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 84 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 1027–41.

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> [upon] the Mount of Olives in the [midst] of his twelve apostles and found a doe…. in pain […] in labor pains. It spoke [to him in these words]: 'Greetings, child of the maiden! Greetings, [firsborn of your] Father and Mother! You must come and help me in this time of need." He rolled his eyes and said, "You are not able to tolerate my glory, nor to tolerate that of my twelve apostles. But though I flee, Michael the archangel will come to you with his [wand] in his hand and receive an offering of wine. [And he will] invoke my name down upon [it] with the name of the apostles, for 'whatever is crooked, let it be straight.' [Let the baby?] come to the light!" The will of [my heart happens] quickly. It is I who speak, the Lord Jesus….[37]

This text, describing an encounter between Jesus and a doe undergoing labor pains, was composed with little relationship to any Christian text and is clearly illustrative of the creativity and agency of ritual experts in the local domain. It is they who compose the *historiola* as much from the symptom or circumstance as from ecclesiastical lore.[38] And yet the story as edited here depends for its content and efficacy on the mythic heroes of the Christian institution. The "magic" lies not only in the performative nature of the *historiola* in recounting a legend of crisis resolved, but also in the *appropriation* of authoritative characters for that purpose. The model for the performative efficacy of these materials, as we see in the latter part of the spell, is in fact the liturgy, the performative hallmark of the Great Tradition.[39] Thus, even in the case of the *historiola*'s often innovative deviations from official texts and formulae, a Great Tradition and its authority will still be invoked for the efficacy of the charm. Here too the category magic covers the appropriation and reframing of authoritative elements of the Great Tradition within the context of the Local Tradition—its oral forms, its specialists, its landscape, social world, and crises.

5 Social Agency in the Representation and Mediation of a Great Tradition

In the discussion of *historiolae* and the sanctioning of magical substances in the Local Tradition, one must inevitably confront the creative or entrepreneurial

37 *ACM* no. 49recto = Berlin 8313, trans. *ACM*, 96.

38 See esp. Olsan, "Charms in Medieval Memory."

39 See Bozóky, *Charmes et prières apotropaïques*, 38–39, 98–103; W.F. Ryan, "Eclecticism in the Russian Charm Tradition," in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, 122; and Van der Vliet, above, Chapter 14.

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agency of the local ritual specialist, perhaps even a priest or attendant, responsible for the reassignment of such materials—Eucharistic hosts, holy oil and water, Latin incantations, etc.—to quotidian ritual purposes.[40] The magic of these substances, as I have been framing it, derives from their continuing gesture towards (in this case) ecclesiastical authority—the Great Tradition—as the larger context in which all these substances carry meaning and potency. But it is important to consider agency (and, indeed, entrepreneurship) in the very construction and representation of any Great Tradition. In late antique Egypt or Syria, for example, the only "Christianity" many villages knew was that articulated and embodied in the local holy man. Consequently, the holy man and the gestural or material "blessings" he or his acolytes issued conveyed the authority of a Great Tradition, for sure, but only in immediate, local terms. Invariably phrased in terms of material powers, the magic was as much a function of his charisma as that of the institution or religion that appeared to sanction him. So if he dispensed amulets of fox-claws or bird-feathers, perhaps accompanied by an oral blessing, that too became a medium of the Christian Great Tradition.[41]

Recognizing indigenous or entrepreneurial agency in the representation of a Great Tradition is vital but methodologically complex. On the one hand the historian may effectively delegitimize the authenticity of religious tradition in the local domain or ignore the value of authoritative tradition itself by deeming it the utter invention of local ritual experts. On the other hand, in giving too little credit to these local experts, the historian may be presuming a Great Tradition too stable or monolithic ever to have existed and local agency reduced to an essentially passive or ministerial role. Yet with Judaism (and Christian forms before the fourth century) and with migrating forms of Egyptian, Phrygian, Syrian, Babylonian, Mazdaian, and other religious traditions in the Roman world, their historical or geographical roots in priesthoods and temple institutions does not mean that their migrating forms reflected a Great Tradition in the sense of a real or meaningful entity. As Heidi Wendt has argued, the image of some ethnically-coded religious heritage in the Greco-Roman world was often the performative construction of a "freelance expert"

40 See Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise," esp. 167–70.

41 Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, chap. 3, extending the observations of Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101. Cf. Stanley J. Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

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who idiosyncratically assembled teachings, ritual styles, accoutrements, and a hoary foreignness in dialectic with popular notions and desires.[42]

It may be easiest to see this idiosyncratic agency in the invention of an Egyptian authoritative tradition. Evidence from the Greek and demotic Egyptian Magical Papyri, as well as a range of ancient novels, points to a particular situation for temple priests in the early Roman period. It seems that some Egyptian priests, disenfranchised through Roman reorganization of the temple economy in the early third century CE, and facing a market of Greeks and Romans already captivated by the "guru" possibilities of oriental priests, creatively appropriated the stereotypes cast upon them. They styled themselves and the religious, textual, and ritual traditions they knew instead in Hellenistic terms—in the language of Greek cosmology, wisdom, and erotic conquest.[43] It has also been suggested that this refashioning of Egyptian priestly tradition could have developed internally, without the market advantages of "stereotype appropriation"; but the historical consequences are the same: the "Egyptian tradition" that one might encounter in the person of a self-professed Egyptian priest at a shrine in Corinth probably bore little resemblance to Egyptian authoritative tradition as one might find it among the principal temples and villages of Egypt.[44]

But authenticity is not the point here; rather, we are trying to identify a magic in the local performance of a Great or authoritative tradition. It does not matter whether the god Anubis is a binder of souls in local Egyptian tradition if clients in Antioch or Alexandria credit his invocation, by someone convincingly acting as an Egyptian priest, with ritual efficacy. Outside of indigenous context, that is, traditional forms of religious authority become exotic and, thus, magical, no matter how loosely they are transmogrified for new audiences.

But this observation—that individual ritual specialists (or "freelance experts") might transmogrify or invent religious traditions wholesale—itself carries important implications. On the one hand, as Wendt herself points out, it can become almost impossible to designate a particular historical individual as a "representative" of a particular religious tradition since all such figures were fundamentally idiosyncratic and entrepreneurial. On the other

42 Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

43 Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 214–37; Frankfurter, "The Consequences of Hellenism in Late Antique Egypt: Religious Worlds and Actors."

44 Richard Gordon, "Shaping the Text: Innovation and Authority in Graeco-Egyptian Malign Magic," in *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H. S. Versnel*, ed. H.F.J. Horstmanshoff et al., RGRW 142 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 69–112.

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hand, more pertinent to this essay, individual agents could (and did) represent themselves as specialists in Great or authoritative traditions that never existed historically in the form of local or "lived" religions. Thus we shift to two of the principal complications to the Redfield model as applied to the ancient world.

6 Complications: The Great Tradition Without Institutional Grounding

It is easy to see the dialectic between Local and Great Traditions as constitutive of magic in late antique Christianity, rabbinic Judaism, Islam—as well as Buddhism, Taoism, Sanskritic Hinduism, and other religions distinguished by scriptures and ranks of religious specialists popularly credited with control of an "official" mythology. But as we have just seen with entrepreneurial ritual experts in Greco-Roman antiquity, Great Traditions were often a function of *projection* from individual ritual experts—a performative pretense, as it were—rather than the historical influence of actual institutional entities. Yet the magic works the same way: the ritual expert claims knowledge or affiliation with some kind of institutional tradition; and charms and texts refer to broadly recognized mythic figures as linked to an established, official, or even textual lore. Thus, to the audience, ritual authority seems to come from the expert's or spell's mediation of a Great Tradition into the immediate circumstances of a Local Tradition. It is a shared investment in and enactment of authority.

We will look at two examples of this process: first, the representation of a Solomon tradition as a type of Jewish magic; and second, a type of Egyptian Christian spell whose mythology maintains a sense of authoritative tradition long after the institutions sustaining it collapsed.

6.1 *The Invented Great Tradition: Early Jewish "Solomonica"*

The ritual expertise both imputed to and performed by Jews in Greco-Roman antiquity was diverse and local in nature, a reputation gathered through others' views of their ethnic alterity and identification with sacred scriptures. Insider materials, as Gideon Bohak has shown, give more evidence of typical oral charming and popular ritual preparations—"charms and root-cutting, … the loosening of spells," as the *Book of the Watchers* puts it (*1 Enoch* 8)—than of a widespread and distinctive Jewish tradition of esoteric ritual practice.[45] There

45 See Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enoch Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 37–44; Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Gendering Heavenly Secrets? Women, Angels, and the Problem

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are occasional references to specialists from the priesthood, the *kohanim*, extending their facility with esoteric books and names to the production of (e.g.) exorcisms, as Qumran texts have shown and the Book of Acts imagines (19:13–16).[46] Through the Roman period "Jewish magic" came to be associated with scripture and with angels' names, both of which fields implied a Great Tradition of scripture and scripture expertise.[47]

But there was another sphere of ritual performance, oriented especially towards exorcism and the control of spirits and associated especially with Jewish experts, which pretended to draw on the traditions of Solomon the king. And this Solomon tradition was essentially invented, like the secret books and inscriptions invoked in the Nag Hammadi and Greek magical texts as sources of authority.[48]

In biblical legend, of course, Solomon is depicted as master of all sorts of sciences and wisdom to build the first temple and rule Israel (1 Kgs 4:29–34); but by the Roman period he was noted for his knowledge of demons and their modes of expulsion. Josephus proudly notes that Solomon "composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved and left behind forms of exorcisms with which those possessed by demons drive them out, never to return."[49] Indeed, Josephus continues, he himself watched a public exorcism of a man in the emperor Vespasian's court in which the Jewish ritual expert used commands, strong scents, and a magical ring, "speaking Solomon's name and reciting the incantations which he [Solomon] had composed." Finally, this Jewish exorcist had the demon tip over a bowl of water on its escape. "And when this was done," Josephus concludes, "the understanding and wisdom of Solomon were clearly revealed" to everyone in the audience.[50]

From little more than this folklore and the freelance experts who drew on it for such ritual performances, Solomon's name became a preeminent authority for spells and amulets against demonic attack in the Mediterranean world of

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of Misogyny and 'Magic,'" in *Daughters of Hekate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. Kimberly Stratton and Dayna Kalleres (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 111–25; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 135–42.

46 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 105–12, 140; Florentino García Martínez, "Magic in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic, from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and J.R. Veenstra (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 13–33.

47 Lacerenza, "Jewish Magicians and Christian Clients"; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 298–313.

48 On invented books cited in ancient documents, see David Frankfurter, "Apocalypses Real and Alleged in the Mani Codex," *Numen* 44, no. 1 (1997): 60–73.

49 Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8.45, trans. Louis H. Feldman, Loeb Classical Library 433 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965). Cf. Wisdom 7:20.

50 Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8.47, 49.

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the Roman period. Many of these amulets referred merely to a "Seal of Solomon" that could repel demons, a mythical object that each ritual expert or craftsman could design in his own way.[51] But among the craftsmen of magical gems, there did develop a consistent iconography of Solomon as conqueror of demons. On these gems Solomon is depicted—sometimes by name—on horseback, spearing a prone female demon, and surrounded with angelic and other magical names.[52] Of course, this apotropaic rider figure also assumed other names and traditional associations as it was reproduced around the Roman Empire, and it bore little relationship to the biblical legend of Solomon. Thus the authority of Solomon did not lead to but rather gained from a broader Mediterranean "rider iconography." While maintaining his roots in Jewish legend, Solomon had become a Mediterranean hero of apotropaic power—a trans-regional authority.[53] In fact by the Roman period we find good evidence that non-Jewish ritual experts and craftsmen were adopting Solomon traditions as well: "I conjure you, every demonic spirit, … by the seal which Solomon placed on the tongue of Jeremiah, and he told."[54] And by the time someone first composed a *Testament of Solomon*, a veritable manual of demon names, habitats, and protective remedies, the Solomon tradition had become a Christian literary project more than a Jewish one. The *Testament of Solomon* is itself a Christian text of about the fourth century CE, although it clearly stands in line with the early Jewish traditions of Solomon.[55]

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51 Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993); David Jordan and Roy D. Kotansky, "A Solomonic Exorcism," in *Kölner Papyri 8*, P. Coloniensia, 7.8 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 53–69.

52 Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon, 1953), 2: 227–32; Paul Perdrizet, *Negotium Perambulans in Tenebris: Étude de démonologie gréco-orientale*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg 6 (Strasbourg: Istra, 1922). See above, Dasen and Nagy, Chapter 17, Illustration 17.1.

53 Gustave Schlumberger, "Amulettes byzantins anciens destinés à combattre les maléfices et maladies," *Revue des études grecques* 5 (1892): 73–93; Todd E. Klutz, *Rewriting the Testament of Solomon: Tradition, Conflict and Identity in a Late Antique Pseudepigraphon* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 83–87.

54 *PGM* IV.3036–40, tr. *GMPT*, 96. On the ambiguity of religious self-definition in the composition of putatively Jewish spells in the *PGM* see LiDonnici, "'According to the Jews.'" In this case I am taking the completed compilation of *PGM* IV as evidence of circulation beyond a Jewish matrix, even if not excluding Jews' use of such Solomon spells.

55 Émil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 3: 376–77; Klutz, *Rewriting the Testament of Solomon*; Sarah L. Schwarz, "Reconsidering the Testament of Solomon," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 16 (2007): 203–37. See also P. Ianda 14 = *PGM* P17 = *ACM* no. 21, with Ra'anan Boustan and Michael Beshay, "Sealing the

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Now as much as modern historians, and probably ancient clients, have tended to associate this Solomon tradition with Judaism, as "Jewish magic," the actual folklore and craft traditions that led to the seals, the rider gems, and the exorcistic tradition had little to do with a Jewish Great Tradition properly conceived: that is, the production of *kohanim* or rabbis, or an expression of scripture. They were, through and through, products of local tradition, enterprising ritual experts, and adept gem-carvers, using a mythic hero associated with books—or simply with the power of the oral incantation.[56] And yet the image of the Solomon tradition involved the appearance—the pretense—of an official system linked intrinsically to a Great Tradition of Judaism: the institution of scripture, temple, and their associated lore and secrets. Although there was no institutional or scriptural substance, it was still an authoritative tradition, passing down and enacting the inscribed wisdom of the great Jewish King Solomon, and thus a unique juggernaut against demons. The efficacy of the gems, amulets, and charms depended on that myth of an authoritative tradition. But that myth was invented; what passed into the performative circumstances of the Local Tradition was a rather flexible notion or pretense of Great Tradition.

6.2 *Authoritative Tradition after the Institution's Demise*

Another way the model of the Great Tradition has to be adjusted to address Roman and late antique realities is provoked by a set of Coptic spells from the sixth and later centuries. Each spell invokes ancient Egyptian deities like Isis and Horus—not only by name and *historiola* but according to archaic speech formulas. For example,

> Hear Horus crying, hear Horus sighing: "I am troubled, poured out (?) for seven maidens, from the third hour of the day until the fourth hour of the night. Not one of them sleeps, not one of them dozes." Isis his mother replied to him within the temple of Habin with her face turned toward the seven maidens (and) seven maidens turned toward her face: "Horus, why are you crying? Horus, why are you sighing?" [Horus:] "Do you wish that I do not cry, do you wish that I not sigh, from the third hour of the day until the fourth hour of the night, while I am poured out for seven

Demons, Once and For All: The Ring of Solomon, the Cross of Christ, and the Power of Biblical Kingship," *ARG* 16 (2014): 99–129.

56 See, e.g., the unusual gem showing Solomon as a youth in Hellenistic dress, holding a scroll in his right hand and (presumably) adjuring spirits with his left hand, in Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, fig. 1056.

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> maidens, not one of whom sleeps, not one of whom dozes?" "Even <if> [you] have not [found me] and have not found my name, take a cup [with] a little water; whether it is a small breath or the breath of your mouth or the breath of [your nose], call down to them, … "You two angels, who imposed sleep upon Abimelech for seventy-two [years], impose upon NN and be a burden upon his head like a millstone, upon his eyes like a sack of sand, until I complete my request to accomplish the desire of my heart, now now, quickly quickly.[57]

This charm recites an incantatory dialogue between the child Horus, in this case afflicted with insomnia (and longing for seven maidens?), and his mother Isis, whose words ultimately hold the power to heal Horus's affliction. It is the kind of charm one might expect to find in Egyptian spell-manuals of the Pharaonic period, yet here it is inscribed on papyrus in the sixth or seventh century CE. Still, what challenges a simplistic explanation of these spells—that Isis/Horus devotion might have persisted in institutional form somewhere in sixth-century Egypt—is that by this period the Great Tradition was monophysite Christianity, monumentalized in monasteries and churches. Any institutional or cultic grounding for the ritual veneration of Egyptian gods that had still lingered in the fourth century would certainly have collapsed by the time of these spells; and the Coptic writing and Christian apocryphal references in these spells probably mean the scribes were monks.

So where did they come from? It is most likely that these are edited versions of oral charms maintained in popular domestic culture: for example, given the rarity of insomnia curses and remedies in late antiquity, the unusual goal of sleep (exemplified in the text above) probably points to a lullaby context.[58] Another, in the Coptic miscellany designated Michigan 136, is clearly a cattle-blessing song:

> Cow, cow of Amun, mother of the cattle, they have drawn near you. In the morning you must go forth to feed (them). They have drawn near you. In the evening you must come in to let them drink. Say, watch out for these 7 things that are bad for producing milk: The sheath, the lid, the worm of Paope that has not yet spread, the barley that has not yet produced shoots,

57 *ACM* no. 48 = Schmidt 1, trans. *ACM*, 94–95. Compare *ACM* nos. 47, 49, 72, 82.

58 David Frankfurter, "The Laments of Horus in Coptic: Myth, Folklore, and Syncretism in Late Antique Egypt," in *Antike Mythen: Medien Transformationen und Konstruktionen*, ed. Ueli Dill and Christine Walde (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 229–47; and Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 206–11. See also above, Frankfurter, Chapter 22.

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> the real weed that does not provide shelter (?) For a shepherd does not provide a staff for a herder, does not provide a goad for a cowherd. They have come to me, my shepherd, my herder, my cowherd, with their garments torn, a strap on the front of their shoe(s) fastened with … of reed. What is it with you, that you are running, that you are in a hurry, my shepherd, my herder, my cowherd, with your garments torn? What is it with you, with a strap on the front of your shoe fastened with fibers of reed? 7 white (?) sheep, 7 black sheep, 7 young heifers, 7 great cows—Let every cow and every domestic animal receive its offspring! For Yao Sabaoth has spoken. Go north of Abydos, go south of Thinis, until you find these two brothers calling and running north, and you run after them, and they run south. Then say, Express the thoughts of your heart(s), that every domestic animal may receive its offspring![59]

The figures addressed in this text change from one divine figure to another, including (remarkably) the ancient god Amun, and the halting structure may well reflect a dialogue, like the Isis/Horus spell above. Yet the overarching theme remains the well-being of cattle, and the speaker's words of blessing concern cattle. Such cattle-blessing songs were still found among the Nuer and Dinka people in the late twentieth century.[60] They demonstrate the close relations of people and their livestock, the embeddedness of song traditions in specific social and economic activities like herding, and the magic of those song traditions.[61]

But this hypothetical life-context for these spells opens up precisely the general question of how magical mediation—in this case, ritual speech consisting of *historiolae* in some form—can gesture toward a Great Tradition. For what constituted and maintained the authority of these songs and their mythic characters when no temple institution, no Great Tradition, persisted? In this case the magical mediation of a Great Tradition has taken on a life of

59 *ACM* no. 43 = Michigan 136, 5–7, trans. *ACM*, 85–86.

60 See, e.g., Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs*, Oxford Library of African Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 96–158; Terese Svoboda, *Cleaned the Crocodile's Teeth: Nuer Song* (Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1985), 14, 32, 101, and passim.

61 See Andromache Karanika, "Folk Songs as Ritual Acts: The Case of Work-Songs," in *Finding Persephone: Women's Religions in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Maryline Parca and Angeliki Tzanetou (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 137–53. Cf. Vesna A. Wallace, "Mongolian Livestock Rituals: Appropriations, Adaptations, and Transformations," in *Understanding Religious Ritual: Theoretical Approaches and Innovations*, ed. John P. Hoffmann (New York: Routledge, 2012), 168–85; and see above, Frankfurter, Chapter 22.

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its own in the world of the Local Tradition, continuing long after the demise of any sustaining institution for the Great Tradition.[62]

One conceivable context for this kind of performative invocation of a Great Tradition no longer in effective existence would be the local ritual expert and his or her skill in recalling and improvising such materials. Thus the authoritative traditions become not just common memory-store but specifically the art of a charismatic, skilled individual. Another context for their perpetuation beyond the historical existence of the Great Tradition would be the *Sitz-im-Leben* or life circumstances of the charms: that is, their embeddedness in the experience of fussy babies and the fortunes of livestock. And a third context would be their performative genre—in song. (Indeed, it is quite possible that specific melodies helped maintain their currency and authority). But beyond these performative circumstances and the habits and gestures that linked them to such songs, the *historiolae* do indeed point to traditions—mythologies—that had *once* been worked through, systematized, and ritually performed by temple priests and also incorporated in the diverse folklore genres of the Local Tradition. They are not distant improvisations from some dim heathen regime. The magic of these texts, that is, lies in the invocation of a Great Tradition into the life-world, just as in earlier times.

7 Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let me propose three roughly distinct ways in which magical act and invocation gain performative efficacy by reference to (or appropriation from) a Great Tradition. The clearest, most basic mode—observed by anthropologists in innumerable cultures—is the direct *mediation* of a living religious institution, its gods and gestures and *sacra*, by an authoritative representative of that institution: monk, priest, rabbi. As Keith Thomas documented for early modern Europe (and manuscripts attest), the latitude such authorized specialists assumed for translating their official traditions was extensive.[63] Clearly this magical mediation of the Great Tradition, its materials and mythological and performative idioms, does not exhaust the ways that local experts might interpret the traditions of a religious institution. We

62 On the centrifugal shift of ritual traditions to the domestic sphere as a response to institutional religious decline, see Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 143–44.

63 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. See also Karen Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charrms in Context* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

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have to consider these ad-hoc ritual functions alongside other local interpretations of the Great Tradition, like the moral, the pedagogical, and the prophetic, all of which might ultimately shade into magical functions. For example, a local prophet might communicate a demonology that draws on the terms of the Great Tradition and that he materializes through the dispensing of special amulets.[64] The *magical* mediation of the Great Tradition thus pertains to invocations of authoritative tradition that stress material, therapeutic, protective, aggressive, and practical areas of ritual expression.

But we have also seen evidence of another way in which a magical act gains performative efficacy by reference to a Great Tradition: when a ritual expert of the Local Tradition improvises elements of a living *or moribund* Great Tradition. His gestures and *historiolae* still presume and invoke a system, a sense of institutional authority, but that system may be long gone, as in the Coptic Isis songs, or it may be officially opposed to these improvisations, as when church fathers and rabbis complained about the misuse of scripture.

The third way of expressing a Great Tradition as the source of authority is to invent it, as we saw in the case of the Jewish, then Christian, Solomon tradition. An invented Great Tradition is not the same as the invented traditions described by Hobsbawm and Ranger in their influential 1983 volume.[65] A Great Tradition implies, in an ideal sense, an institution and hierarchy that knows the religion, writes it out, sustains its central cults, and *from which* certain texts, charms, images, or practices draw their authority. The late antique dissemination of Solomon gems and *historiolae seemed* to imply such an authoritative tradition that some ritual expert might claim to know or be part of. But it never existed as such—not even in Byzantine times with the promulgation of the *Testament of Solomon*.

In these three ways a Great Tradition will operate as the source of authority and the basis of magic: as a living religious system distinct from the Local Tradition; as a moribund religious system invoked still in the Local Tradition, and as an invented source of authority.

Redfield's model thus serves as a heuristic framework for observing the invocation and innovation of authoritative traditions in local milieux, often by enterprising ritual experts or by artisans creating apotropaic images. Whether they existed as actual or idealized institutions, promulgating scriptures or liturgical chants, the Great Traditions discussed here are envisioned as the source of magic: authority rendered in functional forms.

64 See Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, chap. 3.

65 Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14.

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CHAPTER 28

Magic and Social Tension

Esther Eidinow

> To work off one's wrath on any apology for an enemy is expletive, that is, cathartic.[1]

⁘

1 Introduction: The Terminology of "Magic"

This essay explores the relationship between "magic" and social tension in ancient society in terms of two aspects: i) magical practices by individuals, and ii) *accusations* of magical practice among individuals.[2] This distinction is drawn from anthropological studies of the role of magic: initial work that explored the emotional significance of magical practice for the individual, followed by explorations of magic in terms of its symbolic and functional role within a community, as a system of belief and accountability.[3] This essay will

1 R.R. Marett, "From Spell to Prayer" in *Folk-Lore* 15 (1904); Reprint, *The Threshold of Religion*, 1st ed. (London: 1909), 44.

2 In line with the practice of this volume, I use the term "magic" etically in this essay, that is, as a neutral descriptive term to indicate types of ritual practice that seem to share certain characteristics (for a description of "emic" and "etic" approaches to discussions of magic, see E. Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk Among the Ancient Greeks* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 13–14). I aim to avoid the terms "sorcery" or "witchcraft," since the distinction between them made in E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937 [1976]), 9–10, cannot be maintained across different anthropological or historiographical contexts; but I will use these terms where they are contextually appropriate, for example, when referring to a specific scholarly analysis. However, even in these cases (as I will explain) my understanding is that no strong distinction between the two terms is intended. All this said, the difference to which Evans-Pritchard originally alluded may still be of interest to Classical scholarship, as a prompt to consider the emergence of conscious and unconscious forms of supernatural harm achieved by ordinary mortals; see further A. Alvar Nuño, "Ocular Pathologies and the Evil Eye in the Early Roman Principate" *Numen* 59.4 (2012): 295–321, for example, on the evil eye.

3 The idea that the performance of certain ritual practices is related to an individual or group's emotional state can be attributed to the anthropologist Robert Marett, who, in an essay

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examine how scholars of the ancient world have focused on these different aspects of magic in order to try to understand individual and group emotional dynamics, and vice versa. The difficulties of reaching these insights are manifold: our own cultural values and assumptions (for example, about the reasoning of "common-sense," the nature of rational behavior or what is "obvious," and/or the power of previous interpretations) naturally frame our accounts of the evidence: our role is as much creative as elucidatory. With that in mind, the two aspects of magic and social tension under discussion here can also be understood in terms of "discourses of magic," since, while they may vary in terms of specifics, they offer two distinct and recognizable authoritative explanations of systematic and powerful ideas, which embody an (often implicit) set of understandings of social roles and relations.[4] In an attempt to illuminate, and occasionally question, these discourses, the ancient evidence is discussed here with reference to comparative material, drawn from work on other historical periods and, in particular, from anthropological studies. This essay will focus largely on aggressive magical practices, specifically relating to "curse tablets," treating this as a broad category that includes a number of different types of ritual expression, but will also consider in passing other magical activities, including, for example, the creation of spells to elicit protection, such as amulets.[5]

published in 1904, moved the study of magic away from earlier intellectualist approaches (most famously, E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1871) and J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a Study in Magic and Religion. Part 1 The magic art and the evolution of kings* (London: Macmillan, 1900)) by suggesting that such practices gave their user encouragement or relief. Other scholars developed these insights: see, for example, B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, vol. 2 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1935) and Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion," in *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1948; reprint, London: Souvenir, 1982), 79. Ideas about magic's role in the emotional dynamics of the wider community were crucially developed in the examination of magic among the Azande in E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*. Since then, the study of magic and its relation to social dynamics has blossomed across disciplines, offering important insights into the social and emotional lives of those who practice, or accuse others of practicing, magic (R.W. Shirley and A.K. Romney, "Love Magic and Socialization Anxiety: A Cross-Cultural Study," *American Anthropologist* 64.5, part 1 (1962): 1028–31).

4 The term "discourse" has a complex meaning: I am using it here to indicate authoritative academic explanatory accounts. By powerful, I mean the capacity to have an effect—that is, on how the ancient world is understood, in shaping the discursive framework within which further academic analysis takes place; see S. Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2006).

5 On the broad category of curse tablets, and its constituents, as well as the different elements of these spells, including, e.g., *charaktēres*, see above, Chapter 15.

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Let me start with two brief, and no doubt familiar, examples to illustrate the two aspects of magic and social tension discussed in this essay. First, a vivid account of an accusation of aggressive magic is found in the trial of the philosopher and writer, Apuleius of Madaurus. Some time in the consular year 158–159 CE, in the city of Sabratha in North Africa, Apuleius was taken to court by the relatives of his new wife Pudentilla's dead ex-husband. The exact nature of the legal charge is difficult to define, since we only have Apuleius' self-defence, but most scholars take it that he was tried under (some aspect of) the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*, most likely that which dealt with the creation or possession of, or trading in, poison/drugs.[6] Apuleius refers to the charge as the "slanderous charge of *magia*" (*calumnia magiae*), and, defends himself against a number of specific accusations of magical practice, culminating in the charge that he had bewitched the widow Pudentilla in order to persuade her to marry him.

The speech is well known for the insights it gives into provincial Roman society, the formation of relationships, and how and why they might break down. For example, the trial itself is a display of the kinds of rivalries and suspicions that could spring up in an ancient community, and it suggests the kinds of social configurations that might exacerbate them. The content of the accusations made against Apuleius reveals the types of anxieties that, it was generally believed, might provoke a man to attempt to bewitch a woman. That the plaintiffs chose to accuse Apuleius of *magia* also suggests that there was some level of concern about ritual practice in that community. In turn, Apuleius' response—that the practice of *magia* is quite distinct from his philosophical learning, that the governor of Africa, Claudius Maximus, simply will not make the same mistake as his ignorant accusers[7]—illuminates the tensions that might exist in Roman society, between the sophisticated centre and the provinces, between social classes, between foreigner and native. The speech reveals a delicate but deadly game of (re)definitions, as the meaning and significance of the idea of "magic" is batted back and forth between opponents. This kind of discourse can reveal for us how a variety of social

6 F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. F. Philip (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 66; V. Hunink, *Apuleius of Madauros: Pro se de Magia* (*Apologia*), 2 vols. (Amsterdam: E.J. Brill, 1997), 1.13; R. Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic" in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. B. Ankarloo and S. Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 263; M.W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001), 147; but see J. Rives, "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime" *Classical Antiquity* 22, no. 2 (2003): 322–28, on the development of the *Lex Cornelia* from dealing with deaths caused by magical means to general malevolent magical practice.

7 Apuleius, *Apology*, 1.3, 49–51, 53–56.

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dynamics—suspicion, hostility, power—might express and shape communal understanding of the nature and content of deviant behavior.[8]

Although Apuleius seems to suggest that magic was the last thing a cultured man (like him) would practice, the material evidence exposes his position as a rhetorical strategy. For insights into the ancient practice of magic, we turn to a very different kind of evidence: the so-called "Louvre Doll," which dates to the third or fourth century CE. There is a related text, as we will see, which can help us to understand something of the motivations behind the creation of such an object. Nevertheless, the object alone evokes a vivid story, offering a glimpse of the kind of magic that Apuleius and/or his contemporaries may have practiced. The Louvre Doll is a female figurine of unbaked clay resting on her knees. She appears to be hog-tied, her ankles drawn up to her buttocks, her hands bound low behind her back. She has been pierced 13 times: the needles poke out of the top of her head, both eye sockets, both ears, her mouth, the center of her breast and her pubis, her wrists, her ankles and both her feet. The doll was originally placed in a clay pot, and buried, along with a lead tablet containing a text that is 28 lines long. It calls on the gods of the underworld, the restless dead, and the spirit of a dead man, Antinous, to help the writer, Sarapammon, obtain the woman he wants.[9]

For modern viewers, this doll brings to mind a complex, cross-cultural cacophony of rather disturbing associations including sado-masochistic sex, pornography, black magic, and/or "voodoo." In terms of the social dynamics it evokes, it is hard for us to see this pinioned figure and accompanying text as anything other than a man's expression of pointed hatred and violence towards a woman.[10] In fact, the doll turns out to be an interpretation of "a marvelous

8 Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 325–27.

9 Whether this is Antinous, companion to Hadrian, or another Antinous is debated, see M.W. Brashear, "The Greek Magical Papyri: An Introduction and Survey; annotated Bibliography (1928–1994)" *ANRW* 18.5 (1995), 3416. See above, Wilburn, chapter 18.

10 Scholars have been equally fascinated and repelled by the question of the meaning of this statuette, its spell, and the kind of society that created it. Their studies cover many different dimensions of this question: some have simply tried to fit this kind of practice within a single neat definition, arguing that such rituals as the *PGM* describes (private, coercive) clearly fit a criterion of "magical" deviance. See, for example, Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 229–32, who argues that magical ritual proffers "intentional inversions of everyday practices or ordinary ritual", and S.I. Johnston's argument against this in "Sacrifice in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, RGRW 141, ed. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 347 n. 7. Others have questioned what we mean by magic, arguing that these spells come from a tradition of Egyptian temple ritual (D. Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Toward a New Taxonomy of "Magicians," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 159–78). Others have tried to trace the cultural influences apparent in the spell itself, some opting for a

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binding spell" (an *agogē*), in the Greek Magical Papyri (*PGM*), and a number of variations, based on it, have been found.[11] *Agogai*, often called "love spells," were intended to compel the erotic attention of one individual towards another; the *PGM* contains many examples. Sarapammon's doll is a useful, if shocking, reminder that in looking for the social dynamics that created the context of magical practice or accusation, we cannot simply assume that ancient men and women thought and/or acted as we do. It also introduces us to the, apparently widespread and long-running practice of binding-spells—and to our first example of an activity that seems to link magic and social tension.

2 Discourse A: Magical Practice and the Individual

2.1 *When and Where: Contexts, Motivations, and Assumptions*

In recent scholarship on the practice of ancient magic, the corpus of curse tablets has become an increasingly popular subject of study. The texts are usually grouped into five categories that describe the context in which each is assumed to have been written: judicial, erotic, theatrical/performance, commercial, and "border area" curses.[12] The first four of these categories are thought to comprise spells that express the anxieties provoked by the dynamics of competition (discussed further below); their aim appears to be to disable potential rivals in these different civic contexts.[13] The "border area" curses—so-called because of their textual peculiarities rather than any liminal civic context—include aspects of both binding spells and prayers for justice, the latter a distinctive form of address to the gods also found inscribed on lead tablets.[14] "Border area" curses, although they may use the idiom of binding,

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purely Egyptian ritual (R.K. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations 54 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 113). Still others suggest a more complex cultural heritage, involving Greek, Semitic as well as Egyptian features (C. Faraone, "The Ethnic Origins of a Roman-Era *Philtrokatadesmos* (*PGM* IV 296–434)," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 319 and 343).

11 *PGM* IV 296–434.

12 See this volume, above, Chapter 15. C. Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," in *Magika Hiera*, ed. D. Obbink and C. Faraone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3–32.

13 C. Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 11: The spells are assumed to "refer to agonistic relationships, that is, relationships between rival tradesmen, lovers, litigants or athletes concerned with the outcome of some future event."

14 Identified by H.S. Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Between Magic—Religion", *Numen* 38 (1991): 177–97, updated in Versnel, "Prayers for Justice, East and West: New Finds and Publications since 1990" in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from*

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explicitly justify their requests to the gods by complaining about the activities/character of their victims, and how this drove them to take action; their overt concern is justice/revenge.[15]

At first sight, these categories might seem to offer modern scholars an uncomplicated index of the contexts in which the ancients practiced magic—and, thus, a straightforward insight into the social tensions that provoked them. However, it is important to realize the difficulties of applying these categories cleanly. For example, it is not always clear to which category a curse belongs; moreover, the context for which a curse was composed does not necessarily tell us the reasons *why* it was composed. With many of the tablets it is hard enough to attempt the former, before even starting on the latter. As an example, consider *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae* (*DTA*) no. 97 (found in a tomb of uncertain location in the Peiraeus, and dated to the third century BCE), which repeats the following formula:

> I have seized [NAME], and bound their hands, and feet and tongues and souls; and if they are in any way about to utter a harsh or evil word about Philon, or do something bad, may their tongues and souls become lead and may they be unable to speak or act; but rather stab their tongue; and if they have anything, or are about to have anything, whether possessions or property or business, make it lost, stripped away and destroyed, and let them be destroyed for them …

Here is a text that includes an instruction to prevent a target from speaking or acting, so could be included in the category of "judicial" on those grounds.[16] However, it also mentions the possessions, and property or business of the target, so it could be classified under the category "commercial." When, in turn, we consider the circumstances and motivation of its composition, the text may indicate a situation of rivalry, where the writer (Philon?) is concerned to silence a rival speaker, or the need to ruin a business competitor; but it is also

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the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30th Sept.–1st Oct. 2005, ed. R. Gordon and M. Simon, RGRW 168 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 275–354.

15 This category of texts, along with relevant scholarship, is further discussed in chapter 15, below.

16 Binding spells that target the tongues of their victims are often described as having been written for a judicial context, partly because of the widespread evidence that the tongue was a target for binding rival speakers (D. Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls" in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, vol. 2, 27; CTBS, 116–150; but other explanations are also possible: see for example, E. Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Classical Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 239–40.

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possible that the tablet was written out of a strong sense of enmity rooted in another context altogether, which prompted the writer to desire that his victims be broken in every aspect of their lives.

These difficulties become compounded when these categories become the basis for a theory of motivation that attempts to account for the practice of binding in general. The agonistic theory, put forward by Christopher Faraone and subscribed to by numerous scholars, is compelling. It argues that the writers of these tablets were the rivals of their victims in the contexts indicated by the categories, and wrote these spells in an attempt to quash the competition. This theory works well for some individual binding spells in the pre-Imperial period, but particularly for the spells against rival sportsmen, which start to appear in the Imperial period.[17] For example, a spell inscribed on a lead tablet from Oxyrhynchos, dating to the third (or fourth) century CE, which aims at a number of foot-racers (*dromeis*) reads:

> bind down the sinews, the limbs, the mind, the wits, the intellect, the three hundred and sixty-five limbs and sinews of …, whom Taeias bore, and of Aphous, whom Taeis bore, and company, foot-racing athletes, so that they cannot run (?), nor have strength, but let them be sleepless through the entire night and let them throw up all food to their distress and … of them, so that they do not have the strength to run, but let them come in behind, let them come in behind (?) …[18]

In this case, there is little doubt about what the agent of this curse wished to achieve and it is not hard to imagine the circumstances in which it was written.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to find texts that blur these simple classifications: compare these extracts from another curse from Egypt (Alexandria) dated to the second or third century CE:

> May Annianos lose his own power of recollection, and let him remember Ionikos only … possess for me, Ionikos, the strength and might of Annianos, so that you seize him and deliver him to the untimely dead,

17 See, as examples, SGD 24–35, and, as examples of the binding of charioteers, *defixiones* against charioteers from Apamea published in W. van Rengen, "Deux défixions contre les Bleus à Apamée (VIème siècle ap. J.-C.)" in *Apamée de Syrie. Actes du colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 29, 30, 31 mai 1980*, ed. J. Balty (Paris: 1984), 213–234.

18 Translation: *Suppl. Mag.* 2, no. 53.

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> so that you melt his flesh, sinews, limbs, soul, so that he not be able to proceed against Ionikos and neither hear nor see any evil to my disadvantage, moreover prostrate under my feet until he is defeated …[19]

Various reasons why Ionikos cursed Annianos have been put forward: one commentator suggested that Ionikos had cursed Annianos because he feared him; another, that the curse might be a love charm; another, that the curse was more likely written in a judicial context.[20] More recently, an ingenious solution describes the spell as comprising formulae drawn from a range of spell types combined to suit specific circumstances.[21] The following scenario is suggested: that Ionikos feared legal action (l. 24) while himself planning to prosecute Annianos. He used formulae from the erotic *defixiones* "to disarm and mollify Annianos with feelings of love for a false friend," rendering him a powerless opponent in a court-case involving goods that Ionikos acquired from Annianos. The spell is intended to "establish or re-establish a relationship between Annianos as *erastes* and Ionikos as unyielding *eromenos*." If so, then this text reveals a variety of motivations, working across a range of contexts, using diverse spell types, and is a useful illustration of what appears to be an increasing specialization in the mode of spell writing.

Moreover, it may be an impression arising from particular patterns of survival in the material evidence, but it appears that there were trends over time and place in the focus of spells. These can be traced even in the earlier evidence for binding spells: for example, Attica has produced the largest number of spells written for a judicial context, most of which seem to date to the classical period;[22] until the fourth century BCE, love curses (with one exception) seem to have been concerned with separating lovers rather than bringing them

19 Ll. 9–10, 20–26. See details and translation *Suppl. Mag.* 2, no. 54; *DTA* 38, 3.3: 50–52, included in category "*Causa defixionis obscura*," 473.

20 Love charm: P. Moraux, "Une défixion judiciaire au Musée d'Istanbul," *Mémoires Acadèmie Royale de Belgique*, vol. 54, pt. 2 (Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1960), 48, n. 1 and *SGD*, 223, n. 16; Judicial: see K. Preisendanz, "Fluchtafel (Defixion)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 8 (1972): col. 13, f.; for summary, see *Suppl. Mag.* 2, no. 54.

21 *Suppl. Mag.* 2, no. 54.

22 Dating this material is difficult, and many of the tablets dated to the third century BCE in Wünsch, *Defixionum Tabellae Atticae* were redated in A. Wilhelm, "Über die Zeit einiger attischer Fluchtafeln," *Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Instituts in Wien* 7 (1904): 105–26 to the fourth century BCE; see discussion R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 131, n. 65. Jaime Curbera tells me that *Inscriptiones Graecae* is preparing a new edition of Wünsch's collection of tablets, edited by Sergio Giannobile, David Jordan and Jaime Curbera.

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together;[23] and, as mentioned above, curses against rival sportsmen cluster in the Imperial period.[24] Alongside these apparent trends in the context of spell-writing, the material record reveals the development of spells with increasingly specific social aims, and an overlap in the underlying intent of two categories of magic: spells, used to influence others, and amulets, designed to protect their wearers.[25] Thus, we find spells and recipes for spells that are, for example, intended to restrain the anger of others (*thumokatocha*), which are also combined with charms intended to further smooth the social relationships of the charm-wearer, either by restraining, or winning a victory over, opponents or by increasing the wearer's personal charisma or reputation.[26] In turn, the aims of such amulet/spell types may be inverted and transposed into aggressive magic: for example, spells intended to make their target the enemy of another.[27] If spell-types provide an indication of the emotional dynamics behind the spell, then we are dealing with a situation of more complexity than can be described by evoking any single dynamic, such as competition. It does not make sense to argue that the appearance of such spells signals the start date of particular emotional experiences. It seems more likely that the explanation will be found

23 The exception is the love spell of one Pausanias, from Akanthos in Macedonia; see discussion in D.R. Jordan, "Three Curse Tablets," in *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4–8 may 1997*, ed. Jordan, H. Montgomery, and E. Thomassen (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 115–24 and Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*, 457.

24 Faraone, "Agonistic Context," 11, has argued that when Pelops prays to Poseidon in Pindar's *Olympian* 1, ll. 75–78, he is invoking a binding curse. However, Pelops uses a verb, πεδάω, which does not appear as a verb of binding in the corpus of curse tablets.

25 J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1990), 77–79. Such amulets are found more frequently in the formularies than in applied magic, it has been suggested they have a Near Eastern origin in the Neo-Assyrian *egalkura* spells (intended to increase the favour of one's superior), see C. Faraone, "Aphrodite's ΚΕΣΤΟΣ and Apples for Atalanta: Aphrodisiacs in Early Greek Myth and Ritual," *Phoenix* 44, no. 3 (1990): 219–43.

26 Spells to restrain anger: *Suppl. Mag.* 2, nos. 57 (SGD 162), and 79, ll. 19–25 (intended to restrain anger). See discussion in C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 103–6. Numerous *thumokatocha* are found in the *PGM*, see *Suppl. Mag.*, 2, 35 for examples. Combined spells: *Suppl. Mag.* 2, no. 54 (discussed above); no. 58 (a victory charm or *niketika* also intended to restrain anger against its owner), and a recipe for success, favour, victory and the restraint of the anger of superiors: *PGM* XII.270–3 and 277–80. Such spells were not only intended for mortal influence: *PGM* VIII.923–25 asks for victory, strength and influence and is intended to be hung on a ship or horse, see also VII.390–3. For these and further examples, see Faraone, "Aphrodite's ΚΕΣΤΟΣ," 225.

27 *DTA*, 208 (CTBS, 216): a possible development of "separation" curses—usually categorized with "erotic" binding spells.

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in considering the changing nature of cultural attention to evolving social relations. For example, rather than asking, when love rivalry began, so prompting the use of curse tablets, we might ask instead, when and why in particular communities did the *idea* of a love rival *begin to matter in such a way* that the use of binding spells seemed appropriate?[28]

This consideration of the possible changes in motivations for using binding spells recalls the questions raised by Stanley Tambiah about Malinowski's theory that magic was a way of alleviating anxieties when technical knowledge was lacking. As Tambiah points out, the use of magic in relation to Trobriand yam gardening could not be explained simply by a lack of expertise. Rather it seemed to be more adequately explained by the value attributed to yams and yam gardening among Trobriand society. Tambiah suggested in response that if we are to try to account for a society's rituals then we have to "relate that society's rituals and ceremonials to its anticipation and anxieties in the realization of social values rather than to insufficiencies presented by raw nature or by technology."[29] One attempt to do this has been to explore the spell texts and the context of their creation in the framework of the social construction of risk, as formulated by Mary Douglas.[30] This approach suggests that groups select some dangers from among others for particular attention as "risks," for reasons that make sense according to their shared, and evolving, cultural values and concerns. Rather than seeking to provide an answer to the question of motivation, this theoretical framework emphasises the importance of analysing our evidence in terms of the culture that produced it. This is essential: it is clear that ancient spell texts, over time and place, provide insights into a range of contexts and the nexus of widespread anxieties that arose from the

28 For example, although binding-spells were being written in the sixth-fifth centuries BCE, the earliest of the erotic *agogē* spells seems to date only to the fourth century BCE. Ogden, "Binding Spells," 35 has attempted to resolve this problem using the prevailing theory of competition, suggesting that at first "the binding idiom did not seem immediately useful for situations of love, and it was indeed the rather specific erotic circumstance of the presence of a rival (real or feigned) for the beloved's affections, an 'enemy' in love, that first brought curse tablets into the erotic sphere." See discussion of erotic curses in Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*, 210–28.

29 Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 72.

30 See Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*: drawing on the idea of the social construction of risk, developed by Mary Douglas in M. Douglas, *Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences* (London: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986), Douglas, *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1992), and Douglas and A. Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture* (London: University of California Press, 1982).

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(changing) demands of what Winkler calls "the wary game of life."[31] In order to understand them, we must attempt to place these ritual practices in context—not only that of the particular individual, but also of his or her community, and wider socio-cultural situation—and, as this suggests, we must be prepared to explore how both context and practices may have evolved over time.

The difficulties that beset such a task can be illustrated by examining the representation of the larger relationship between gender and love-magic as portrayed in ancient evidence, and then interpreted in modern scholarship. For example, for a long time it was accepted that that the erotic spells of the papyri and lead tablets were largely written by men against women, in contrast to the literary representations of practitioners as predominantly female.[32] These views have since been challenged by a number of scholars.[33] The evidence suggests that, on the one hand, "There is no evidence of an assumption on the part of non-imaginative male writers that erotic magic was the special preserve of women and that it was only practiced by love-lorn females," and, on the other hand, that the formularies were adapted for use by both genders, for use against both genders.[34]

We also need to be aware of our own assumptions. An attempt to make sense of the apparent contradictions of ancient literary and documentary evidence may underpin recent interpretations of (aggressive) spell-working by women. For example, Faraone has approached the question of gender and magical practice by arguing that men and women used different kinds of spells: the practice of erotic magic was primarily a male activity, its violence normalized within this culture. Male practitioners were motivated by the urge for sexual conquest, or the desire for a profitable marriage: their use of aggressive magic was part of their male identity.[35] In turn, he argues, "one special group of

31 Winkler, *Constraints of Desire*, 79.

32 J. Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," in *Magika Hiera*, 227–8; supported by Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 185–86, and C. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 43 n. 9.

33 Especially M.W. Dickie, "Who Practised Love-Magic in Classical Antiquity and in the Late Roman World?," *Classical Quarterly* 50.2 (2000): 563–83, who challenges the findings for both literary and documentary evidence. Gager (CTBS, 80–81), and Ogden, "Binding Spells," 63–67, suggest a revision of the evidence from the spells; see also E. Pachoumi, "The Erotic and Separation spells of the Magical Papyri and Defixiones," *GRBS* 53 (2013): 294–352. Faraone, *Love Magic*, 83–84, finds problems with the depiction of a "standardized lovesick performer or client"; he argues that the curses are not therapeutic but likely to increase the self-confidence of the agent.

34 See Dickie, "Who Practised," 580, for quotation and 566 for discussion of gender in the formularies.

35 Faraone, *Love Magic*, 84–95, 122–24.

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women regularly co-opted these traditionally male forms of magic: courtesans and prostitutes."[36] This analysis has been challenged by Dickie, but, as I have noted elsewhere, his criticisms nevertheless offer some implicit support for Faraone's approach, since he assumes that the female agents of curses must be involved in commercial sexual activities.[37] In fact, women who were not sex-workers may well also have written such texts: for example, if they found their economic or emotional security threatened by a rival.[38] While interpretations that divide society and the anxieties of its members along gender lines may offer clear(er) explanations, they risk eliding more complex social dynamics.[39] Some examination of the possible motivations and cultural assumptions of the writers of the literary evidence, or consideration of the historical realities of daily life for ancient women in different parts of society, may instead help to produce a more nuanced understanding of the social tensions expressed in and by the use of love spells.

In conclusion, we can see how, as with other disciplines, evidence for ancient ritual practices may be used to provide historians with insights into the emotional lives and social concerns of ancient men and women, and to trace

36 Faraone, *Love Magic*, 149. Although arguing that women in the Hellenistic period had the freedom to practice attraction magic, and that the gender distinction between types of spells is hard to maintain, Dickie ("Who practised," esp. 571) still assumes that the majority of curse writers are prostitutes motivated by economic demands.

37 Dickie, "Who Practised," esp. 565; see Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*, 212–13.

38 See Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*, 210–228, for this argument about the social context in which women might write spells in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, followed by D. Frankfurter, "The Social Context of Women's Erotic Magic in Antiquity," in *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. K. Stratton and D. Kalleres (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 319–39, concerning women writing spells in the Roman period.

39 See A.Y. Reed, "Gendering Heavenly Secrets? Women, Angels, and the Problem of Misogyny and Magic" in *Daughters of Hecate*, 108–51 and K. Stratton, "Interrogating the Magic-Gender Connection," *Daughters of Hecate*, 1–37 on the stereotypes connecting women with (ancient) magic. In analyses of witchcraft in other times and places, work that examines the gendered preconceptions of scholars as well as those of their historical subjects in various ways includes L. Apps and A. Gow, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*. (Manchester University Pres, 2003), who argue for the feminization of male witches; see also M. Gaskill, "Masculinity and Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Rowlands (Basingstoke, Macmillan UK, 2009), 172. Others have argued for a distinct male "other," e.g., E. Labouvie, "Men in Witchcraft Trials: Towards a Social Anthropology of 'Male' Understandings of Magic and Witchcraft," in *Gender in Early Modern German History*, ed. U. Rublack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 49–70; A. Rowlands, "Not the 'Usual Suspects'? Male Witches, Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe," in *Witchcraft and Masculinities*, 1–30.

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possible areas of social tension—be they political, erotic, or related to other circumstances—between individuals and within communities. The difficulties of tracking down such ephemeral experiences are, however, manifold. This is partly a matter of the kind of evidence we have: without the possibility of fieldwork, our interpretations of individual and group motivations must rely on textual and material analysis, paying close attention to content, form and idiom. As may already have become apparent, one way to look for relevant evidence is to establish models of particular kinds of tensions (for example, competition against rivals) and then to try to trace these models across different kinds of evidence. This is a productive approach, but brings its own risks: for example, it is easy to overlook the emotional messiness of daily life, and the possibility that different kinds of social tensions may overlap and interact. It is possible to depend too closely on our own cultural assumptions and biases, closing down the possibility that the experience of social tensions in the ancient world may have been different from what we expect in both kind and quality, so that we overlook alternative analyses of the evidence. One helpful approach may be to draw on comparative material from other historical periods and other cultures, working, for example, with anthropological studies that may widen and deepen our understanding of both magic and social tension, and of the relationship between the two; the next section offers some examples of how this might work.

2.2 *How and Why: Anger, Anxiety and Catharsis*

Many of the current accounts of ancient magic take a symbolist approach, focusing on the resolution of social tension as an explanation for its use, but with varying levels of attention to social, cultural or historical specifics. Perhaps the most straightforward argues that magic is employed (or commissioned) by those who lack any other form of influence over others in society: "Usually it is the losers, the weak, who resort to magic, people are angered, but do not have means and power to take revenge or have satisfaction in the ordinary way."[40] In this explanation, the use of magic is depicted as limited to individuals who are excluded, by social status, from more (it seems to be implied) mainstream and socially acceptable methods of resolving problems. However, others have rightly expanded this analysis, arguing that contexts of crisis—situations of apparently insuperable difficulty—that are exacerbated by a sense of uncertainty, can engender a feeling of powerlessness for anyone,

40 J. Braarvig, "Magic. Reconsidering the Grand Dichotomy," in *The World of Ancient Magic*, 21–54, esp. 26–27. The quotation is intended to illustrate one example of a more widespread approach.

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whatever their social status: "The performance (or commission) of a spell made it possible to regain the initiative and the hope that one could affect the outcome. The ritual thus offered both the community and the individual a means to master emotionally an otherwise difficult crisis."[41]

Although compelling, these theories pay little attention to specific social, cultural or historical contexts. Underpinning the assertion that users of magic are likely to be the weakest members of society seems to be an assumption that magical means were perceived, by the users themselves, as weapons of last resort that probably did not work. However, the ancient evidence suggests a culture in which magical practice was understood to be a source of power by most people, not just desperate losers, and this is understandable: after all, if your opponent is using magic, then surely it would be foolish not to do so yourself, whatever other "ordinary ways" are available. Besides, when we consider the context for which many spells were written, it remains uncertain what alternative means there may have been. Many of the spells above seem to have been prompted by a sense of anxiety or resentment; for example, that you will not receive the favor/victory/woman that you crave, that you will be the target of someone's anger/gossip/magic spell; that a dead man is not receiving appropriate rites. It is not clear what "ordinary ways" could be on hand for self-protection in such circumstances. This, in turn, suggests that a monolithic explanation of magic as resolution of crisis (as described above), while it does offer some compelling aspects, omits consideration of some key aspects.

An important dimension is the precise nature and content of such crises, which would, naturally, have varied in crucial ways for individuals of different gender and status. This raises, in turn, the question of how and why for these individuals, in particular times and places, it seemed right to respond to certain circumstances with a particular type of ritual. One attempt to offer a theory of the experience provided by ancient magical ritual that paid greater attention to the individual was famously made by the philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein.[42] Writing in response to Frazer's argument that practitioners of ritual acts expected by their activities to make actual change in the real world, Wittgenstein argued that magical rituals pertained to the emotions of those who performed them.[43] The position that the philosopher was taking

41 Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 150: the note attached there should be treated with care, since it does not distinguish between explanations of magical acts and accounts of witchcraft accusations.

42 L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, ed. R. Rhees (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Brynmill Press, 1979).

43 See D.Z. Phillips, "Wittgenstein, Wittgensteinianism, and Magic: A Philosophical Tragedy?" *Religious Studies* 39.2 (2003): 185–201, on why Wittgenstein was not proposing

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has been much debated: some deny that he saw ritual as instrumental; others have seen in his arguments the idea that ritual could offer a catharsis for its practitioner(s), a theory which has also put been put forward by anthropologists studying the role of group rituals.[44]

Turning to ancient aggressive magic, various arguments have been made against the idea that binding spells offered emotional expression, in particular, a catharsis, for their practitioners. The first turns on assumptions about the relationship of emotion and ritual: Graf has argued against the idea that the binding spell ritual is an expression (and release) of anger or desire, on the grounds that the ritual process was too complex to allow "an immediate and spontaneous discharge" of emotion.[45] He goes on to argue that the possibility that professional curse writers were commissioned to write curses makes it even less likely that the ritual of binding might offer sufferers some kind of emotional release.[46] However, these objections can be questioned from a number of different directions. First, thinking about the possible ritual process involved: some anthropological studies suggest we cannot take it for granted that spontaneity is a necessary element for the expression of anger through rituals.[47] (Nor, incidentally, is it clear that the emotions prompting the creation of a binding spell could be described simply in terms of anger; it seems highly likely that multiple, conflicting emotions were involved.[48]) Second, the requisite emotional release could perhaps be found precisely through visiting a ritual specialist: comparative material suggests that part of the art of being such a professional may be the art of knowing how to engage with a client's emotional state. Far from being a routine event, spell-writing may be understood as both an exercise in, and demonstration of, a remarkable power possessed by the spell-writer/reciter. In the ritual context, the individual creating the spell is therefore likely both to implement, and to display, his or her personal power in ways relevant to the occasion. Malinowski, for example, provides a

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an emotionalist theory of religion (arguing against B. Clack, "Wittgenstein and Magic" in *Wittgenstein and Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Robert L. Arrington and Mark Addis (London: Routledge, 2001).

44 For a range of views, succinctly described, see C. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 33.

45 Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 146.

46 Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 147; cf. H.S. Versnel, "'And any other part of the entire body that there might be …': An essay on anatomical curses" in *Ansichten griechischer Ritual*, ed. F. Graf (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1998), 217–67, esp. 252–58.

47 Thomas J. Scheff, *et al.* "The Distancing of Emotion in Ritual" *Current Anthropology* 18, no. 3 (1977): 483–505, and S. Mahmood, "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of Şalat" *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 4 (2001): 827–53.

48 E. Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*, 224–53.

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famous example with his vivid observations of the Melanesian sorcerer who "filled himself with anger and hatred" when he enacted a curse, and even when performing love magic he "reproduced the behavior of a heartsick lover who has lost his common sense and is overwhelmed by passion."[49] From a study of Finnish and Karelian charm texts, Ilomäki comes to similar conclusions.[50] She examines the apparently rare appearance of the pronoun "I" in these texts to explore its significance for the role of the spell-reciter.[51] Her analysis suggests that it differs from its use in other folklore genres: although in the text it may appear as an empty verbal unit, in the moment of ritual "it is penetrated by the reciter's self."[52] As such its use suggests that the charm teller must, in these moments, have committed to the ritual, trusting in, and demonstrating, his "personal magical power."[53]

This comparative material might also be used in examination of the arguments put forward by Faraone, who argues against a therapeutic or cathartic role for binding spells, and in particular *agogē* spells. Instead he argues for their "dispassionate use," drawing attention to the relative lack of "emotional engagement and improvisation" in the spell texts (he excludes "prayers for justice" from this description). He suggests that, within the context of his competitive paradigm, binding spells were more likely to offer their performer "enhanced self-confidence" than provide a mechanism of emotional release. Indeed, he suggests that rather than seeing the violent aspects of *agogē* magic as expressions of the emotion of the performer of the spell, they should be viewed in terms of "a traditional and practical response to problems of access to women of marriageable age" in a context that presented social obstacles (e.g., parental disapproval, betrothal to another man, the unwillingness of the victim).[54] Unfortunately, it is hard to evaluate this approach thoroughly since it is far from clear from the extant curse texts just what the accompanying ritual comprised. Nevertheless, the details of the texts themselves make this analysis difficult to accept: for example, it is hard to imagine an individual, however confident, going so far as to invoke *chthonian* gods and/or the dead for help

49 Malinowski, "Magic, Science and Religion," 71–72.

50 H. Ilomäki, "The Self of the Charm," in *Charm and Charming in Europe*, ed. J. Roper (London: Macmillan, 2004), 47–58.

51 I say "apparently" here because Ilomäki notes (Ilomäki, "The Self of the Charm," 56) that the pronoun may be more common than the texts suggest, since it is possible i) that the seers from whom these charms were collected did not want to reveal materials that might give away their powers; and ii) they may have used the pronoun only in a frenzied shamanistic state not reached while dictating charms for the folklore collectors.

52 Ilomäki, "The Self of the Charm," 56.

53 Ilomäki, "The Self of the Charm," 56.

54 Faraone, *Love Magic*, 83, and quotation, 84.

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against their victim without any emotional agitation. We should also consider the patterns of language in these texts—in particular, in later curses, the appearance of *voces magicae* (strings of nonsense words)—which, as Versnel has argued, offered the user the potential for personal "creational processes," evoking the "marvelous potential in another world."[55]

More specifically, the focus of these spells (as Faraone observes) on "the prospect of the female victim eagerly making love to the man who performs or commissions the spell" does suggest a certain level of personal desire on the part of the spell-performer, which hardly fits the dispassionate exercise that Faraone describes. The comparative material adduced above suggests that ritual practice by its very nature demands from its practitioners a certain level of emotional engagement. It is not clear, in this sense, just what a "dispassionate ritual" would involve or how it would be conducted. The idea that a ritual practice might climax in a catharsis that brings resolution and order from emotional chaos is a seductive one. But, as Taussig has outlined in his examination of shamanic healing rituals among the Putumayan Indians, such a description in itself is a magical rite, providing the reader with a climatic "release of a new meaning rescued from the blockage of disorder." His own experience of the shamanic practice he described was far less ordered. The power of the experience, and in particular the imagery used in the ritual, lies in "its insistently questioning and undermining the search for order."[56]

Jack Winkler's analysis of *agogē* spells, which highlights their "rhetoric, drama, and social psychology," offers an example of how the acknowledgement of disorder might be found in the ritual of binding spells.[57] Within a detailed scrutiny of ancient gender relations, acknowledging the pathological aspects of *eros* and the nature of personal success in an "agonistic, masked duplicitous society," Winkler argues that certain magical texts had a therapeutic role that included a series of displacements. Thus, the torments felt by the agent of the curse are imagined afflicting the target; the agent of the curse assumes the authority of the gods he invokes, rather than being in the control of another; and, finally, he persuades the deity that his victim deserves to be punished.[58] As a result, "*agogai* … turn out to make sense as psychodramas in which intensely

55 Versnel, "The Poetics of the Magical Charm" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, 105–58, quotations from 153 and 155.

56 M. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the White Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 390.

57 Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," 224. Faraone, *Love Magic*, 82, describes Winkler and Wittgenstein as espousing a "cathartic or therapeutic" model. Winkler's analysis of the gendered nature of these practices has been challenged: on this aspect, see further below.

58 Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," 226–27.

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disturbing emotions are manipulated and treated."[59] Although Winkler's approach has been described as attributing a cathartic role to binding spells, his analysis ascribes a more complex function for the spells. Although he does not emphasize this paradox, Winkler notes how the creation of an *agogē* spell was "a therapy that not only proclaims its own extremity but even in a certain sense its own impossibility," and, he notes how it comprises a "fictitious denial and transfer."[60] Even as the ritual reassigns roles, it emphasizes the weakness that it seeks to treat, it highlights the agent's sickness, suffering and actual lack of control.

Moreover, in a second paradox that Winkler observes, these texts conduct a discourse on female desire and female pleasure—or rather, we might rephrase it, on male ideals of female desire and pleasure—and they speak of this desire as something autonomous.[61] Seen in this light, *agogē* spells seem to offer, not a catharsis of pent-up emotion, but a more complex treatment, one that acknowledges, even brings to light, a series of paradoxes: they provide an alternative and powerful set of images of what is not; they grant the spell writer a power that he does not have; they highlight the power of women in a society that denies it. Winkler emphasizes how these texts "paradoxically incorporate rather than suppress women's desire," and the social context in which it occurs.[62] As Dickie has demonstrated, further nuances to this model—and to the context of gender relations—can be introduced by investigating, in more detail, both the evidence for the use of such spells *by* women and the changing nature of social roles available to women.[63] Nevertheless, as noted above, our resulting analyses must proceed cautiously: while it may be that many of the spells "attribute a considerable level of sexual freedom and sexual experience to the female victims," this does not necessarily mean that the spells should be regarded as documentary evidence for the lives of women, providing accurate depictions of their situations and experiences.[64]

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59 Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," 230.

60 Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," 226.

61 Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," 233.

62 Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros," 216.

63 In particular, it must be noted that half of the erotic and separation spells in the Greek and Demotic formulary papyri use the *deina* formula, which can be applied to both men and women: see Pachoumi, "Erotic and Separation spells," 314, following Dickie, "Who Practised," 567. For discussion and analysis of women's use of pre-Imperial erotic binding spells aimed at separating couples, see Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*, 210–28.

64 Cf. Pachoumi, "Erotic and Separation spells," 307, who concludes that this excludes "the possibility that these women were well-guarded maidens in their natal homes." But as Winkler, ("The Constraints of Eros," 233) observes, "The social implications of this autonomous desire are alluded to in the neighbouring clauses that request forgetfulness

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While the role of gender remains contested, nevertheless, many modern explanations of ancient aggressive magic suggest that magic offered individuals in ancient society a method of alleviating personal tensions, by helping to calm and even purge emotions that could not otherwise be expressed or resolved. These dynamics no doubt played their part, but further analysis may suggest a more complex model of social interaction. In particular, the common understanding of magic as the pursuit of a lone individual working out (his) frustrations and desires in secret may have implicitly limited our understanding of the nature and role of ancient magic and its practitioners. For example, such a definition elides the idea that a city or community might also, quite openly, practice magic: the argument seems to be that if the lone, rebellious practitioner is a characteristic of "magic," then city(-sanctioned) rituals must automatically become a matter of "religion" not magic, whatever their nature.[65] However, there are striking similarities between some individual magical rituals and certain community ritual practices. There is some, albeit scanty, evidence that certain communities may have enacted types of binding spell to protect themselves from warfare or from supernatural or mortal hostility.[66] Slightly more evidence is available showing defensive measures taken by communities who viewed themselves, or their members, as having been victims of magical attack. For example, both the Cyrenean *Lex Sacra* and the *Lex Sacra* from Selinus appear to have offered city-sanctioned rituals for members of their community who found themselves visited by supernatural entities.[67] In other evidence we find descriptions of a community resorting to magical action in order to protect itself from supernatural aggression: there are ancient literary accounts of Sparta and Athens, respectively, hiring spirit-raisers to work some kind of spell in their defence. Epigraphic evidence shows that a

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of parents and relatives, husband and children." See Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*, 212–13, on the arguments of Faraone and Dickie regarding the gendered nature of erotic magic.

65 The anti-social nature of magic is a characteristic that differentiates it from religion in the writings of (e.g.) M. Mauss, and H. Hubert, *A General Theory of Magic* (1902; Reprint, London; New York: Routledge, 1972). But the distinction goes back much earlier than this (see Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 229).

66 See discussion in C. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 74–85 and App. 4, as well as above, Wilburn, Chapter 18.

67 *Lex Sacra* from Cyrene: SEG ix 72, LSS 115, see R. Parker, *Miasma* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), *App*. 2. The *lex sacra* from Selinous also includes instructions for purification from supernatural entities (col. B, 1–13); see M.H. Jameson, D.R. Jordan, and R.D. Kotansky, *A Lex Sacra from Selinous*. Greek Roman and Byzantine Monographs 11 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 54–58, esp. 55 where they draw an explicit parallel between that text and the purification law from Cyrene.

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city might attempt to exert supernatural power on its own behalf: the public curse of the city of Teos, was aimed against (among others) anyone who should use *pharmaka* (which may mean "drugs" or "spells") against the community.[68]

The much-debated question of whether we should distinguish magic from religion cannot be pursued in detail here. Nevertheless, this brief discussion raises questions about how an authoritative discourse may shape definitions and, in the process, grant particular practices legitimacy while denying it to others. This remains a particularly valuable consideration as we turn to the second discourse in which magic is linked with social tensions: accusations of magic.

3 Discourse B: Magical Accusations and Society

3.1 *Who and When: Envy, Gossip and Misfortune*

Ancient evidence suggests that people may have suspected, or even known, when spells had been cast against them. As in other cultures worldwide, in the ancient world, personal misfortune and failure were often attributed to a malevolent magical attack by an enemy, often prompted by envy.[69] As plentiful anthropological studies reveal, the belief that one is the target of a spell, for those who believe in the potency of magic, can be very powerful.[70] Identifying a perpetrator may have been relatively straightforward. For example, some curses were probably put on public display, perhaps in the local sanctuary.[71]

68 Spirit-raisers by individuals: an unnamed consultant at the oracle of Dodona asks if hiring 'Dorios the spirit-raiser' is a good idea (see Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk*, 114); when he is haunted by Cleonice, a young woman he has murdered, the Spartan general Pausanias visits an oracle of the dead (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 555c) but, in another account, he also considers hiring spirit-raisers (Pausanias, 3.17). Spirit-raisers hired by cities: according to one account, when, after his death, Pausanias proceeds to haunt the Spartans, they hire spirit-raisers (scholia to Euripides, *Alcmeon*, 1127–8, with Plutarch, *Homeric Studies*, F1 Bernardakis (1891)); Athens summons Epimenides from Knossos to purify the city after the murder of Cylon and his supporters: Diogenes Laertes, 1.109–112. Public curse of the city of Teos (c. 470 BCE), see R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), no. 30.

69 P. Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity" in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas (London: Psychology Press, 1970), 25; Euripides, *Alcmeon*, fr. 67, ed. A. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1889); Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, 3.14–5. Magical explanations could coexist with more spiteful ones: Cicero, *Brutus*, 217, and Libanius *Orationes*, 1.43 and 62, and 245–49, discussed in more detail below.

70 J. Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

71 See discussion in Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*, 217–18.

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But another answer can be pieced together from a consideration of the ancient evidence in the context of comparative historical and anthropological studies. Across time and place, these studies pinpoint a key aspect of the social dynamics surrounding magic: gossip. From sixteenth-century German villagers to modern-day inhabitants of Soweto, it seems that gossip coupled with envy has played and continues to play a significant factor in raising and spreading knowledge/suspicions that magic has been employed by one person against another. Ancient victims of magic probably knew when and why they were likely to be the target of a supernatural strike—because they lived with the people who would use it against them. Indeed, it may be that just as magic itself involved recognisable ritual activities, so too did the role of "victim of magic": the ritualization of physical and social experiences by so-called victims also manufactured the phenomenon of "magic," as we will see.[72]

So, if one was recognizably a victim of "magic," the question was what to do in response. The suspicion that one had been attacked oneself might in turn provoke one to issue an attack in kind oneself, suggesting a "magical arms-race" of the kind that Daniel Ogden evokes as a characteristic of ancient daily life.[73] Alternatively, at least in the Imperial period and later, if the attack provided fatal, one might simply display one's suspicions on the grave *stele* of the presumed victim—although this did not usually involve naming the perpetrator.[74] Such inscriptions usually ask the god Helios for justice, and feature an image of two raised hands. Both of these approaches keep the name of the magic-worker concealed. In contrast, a third and final approach would be to expose the magical attack to the cold light of the civic judicial system.[75] As anthropologists have observed, the process of bringing witchcraft accusations into the open

72 E. Eidinow, "Ancient Greco-Roman Magic and the Agency of Victimhood," *Numen* 64 (2017): 394–417.

73 Ogden, "Binding Spells"; see, for example, NGCT 24 (with Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*, 67 and 224) and CTBS, no. 107.

74 For example, a stele asking for revenge for the murder of one Heraklea (CTBS, no. 185); see also H.S. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers," in *Magika Hiera*, and Versnel, "Writing Mortals and Reading Gods Appeal to the Gods as a Dual Strategy in Social Control," in *Demokratie, Recht und soziale Kontrolleim klassischen Athen*, ed. D. Cohen (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002), 37–76; F. Graf, "Victimology: or, How to Deal with Untimely Death," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. S.P. Ahearne-Kroll, P.A. Holloway, and J.A. Kelhoffer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 228–40; R.G. Edmonds III, "Blaming the Witch: Some Reflections upon Unexpected Death", in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions*, 241–54; Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*, 191–211.

75 See D. Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic and Sorcery Fears in Roman Egypt," *GRBS* 46 (2006): 37–62; E. Eidinow, "Patterns of Persecution: 'Witchcraft' Trials in Classical Athens," *Past and Present*, 208, no. 1 (2010): 9–35, and Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death*.

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is paradoxical in itself, giving witchcraft rumours the publicity that enhances their power, while at the same time allowing opportunities for fears to be resolved. Indeed, Peter Geschiere has suggested that this is why, in recent years in the East Province of Cameroon, witchcraft cases have been brought before the state courts—they provide a new public arena in which to bring to light fears of witchcraft.[76] Was this also the case with ancient magic trials?

For a first-hand description of a community response to an accusation of magic in the ancient world, we return to the trial of Apuleius. As noted, the case brought against him was motivated by envy of his good fortune on the part of those who were being deprived, by his marriage, of his wife's wealth. As Apuleius makes clear at the beginning of his defence, it was the rumours promulgated by his opponents about his various activities, in particular the "love magic" that had helped him to achieve his marriage, which finally brought him to court. But in case this seems like a unique occurrence, another vivid example can be found in the case of Libanius, a teacher of rhetoric in the fourth century CE, a cultured and cosmopolitan man who trained in Athens and Constantinople, finally accepting the chair of rhetoric in Antioch.[77] In his autobiographical writing he describes how he was frequently accused of supernatural aggression by rival speakers; he, in turn, is also the victim of a magical attack. In his description of this event in particular, we learn how, when misfortune is attributed to an attack of supernatural violence, gossip can help to identify the guilty party. Libanius reports how "my friends kept urging me, and each other too, to prosecute certain individuals who were rumoured to be responsible for this." Libanius restrains his friends, "telling them to offer up prayers rather than to have folk arrested for secret machinations."[78]

Both of these accounts illustrate the roles played by envy and gossip in the social process of creating an explanation of what might remain, otherwise, an inexplicable misfortune. Those who suffer—whether because of their own misfortune or the fortune of others—understand their experiences to be rooted in the hostile feelings of their neighbours. The social and emotional dynamics of the local community help members of that community to make

76 P. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, trans. Janet Roitman (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 204. For those concerned with the use of terms (as raised by my n.2 above), Geschiere notes (225, n. 1) that he uses the terms "witchcraft" and "sorcery" interchangeably on the grounds that the distinction does not apply very well to the Cameroonian societies he studies.

77 This example and the role of gossip discussed more extensively in Eidinow, "Patterns of Persecution" and *Envy, Poison, and Death*.

78 Libanius, *Orationes*, 1.248, trans. A.F. Norman, Loeb Classical Library 451 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

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sense of events. Together, they can reach a consensus, their conclusions based on shared feelings of fear, suspicion, envy, and hostility, their knowledge of these feelings based on gossip; and that consensus may lead to action.[79] As the two examples demonstrate, how this interaction plays out (in particular, where the players will turn for resolution of the situation) will depend on the context and characters involved; so, for example, Libanius was urged to take his rumoured attacker to court but refused, while Apuleius of Madaurus insisted that those whispering against him bring formal charges instead.[80]

These cases allow us to see something of the specific interpersonal dynamics that provoked these flurries of accusations, but in aggregate they allow us to plot more widespread patterns of social tension, arising out of particular historical circumstances, which may have increased the susceptibility of certain relationships to such accusations. For example, Apuleius's trial may have evoked a clash between local community values and Roman sophistication typical of its time, where the trial was a vehicle of expression for the anxiety of a community in the throes of cultural transition.[81] Libanius's trial may be evidence for another phase of socio-political conflict: as Peter Brown has argued, trials for maleficent magical attack became increasingly common in the late Imperial period because socio-political changes provoked a clash of systems of power, where those who held the new fixed, defined and vested roles confronted those with more traditional and (ill-defined) power that was based "on the imponderable, almost numinous prestige of classical culture and aristocratic values in Late Roman society."[82] These accusations of such attacks were a

79 On the important role of gossip in accusations of magic, see, for example, Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," H.S. Versnel, "'Punish Those Who Rejoice in Our Misery.' On Curse Tablets and Schadenfreude," in *The World of Ancient Magic*, 125–62, and more recently Graf, "Victimology" and Edmonds III, "Blaming the Witch," who emphasizes the uncertainty of such accusations, also noted by Versnel, "'Punish Those Who Rejoice in Our Misery,'" 133. See further Eidinow, "Patterns of Persecution" and *Envy, Poison, and Death* for detailed analysis of these social processes.

80 For examples of the role of gossip and envy see: Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words*, Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism*, and P.J. Stewart and A. Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death* focuses on these two phenomena in detail, to explore the context of accusations of, and trials for, illicit ritual practice in fourth-century BCE Athens. For examples of situations where law courts rather than local social processes have provided resolution see Frankfurter, "Fetus Magic," Eidinow, "Patterns of Persecution," and *Envy, Poison, and Death*.

81 K. Bradley, "Appearing for the Defense: Apuleius on Display", in *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, ed. Jonathan Edmondson and A. Keith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

82 P. Brown, "Sorcery, Demons," 18, 22–3. According to his own account, Brown refers to this as "sorcery," consciously aligning himself with Evans-Pritchard's distinction between this

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way of expressing resentments and targeting anomalous sources of power, in a realm where political opposition of a more organised mundane sort was firmly suppressed: "Sorcery beliefs in the Later Empire, therefore, may be used like radioactive traces in an x-ray: where these assemble, we have a hint of pockets of uncertainty and competition."[83]

We may also be able to find larger patterns across cultures. For example, the community of Roman courtiers in Brown's analysis is typical insofar as it is a small group of people well known to each other; Robin Briggs's exploration of accusations of magical antagonism in the context of early modern European witchcraft focuses, as his title suggests, on "Witches and Neighbors"; while anthropologists working in Africa have observed that the power of witchcraft is thought to increase with the intimacy of the relationship.[84] Attempts to map such patterns have increased in their sophistication and specificity. In her introduction to *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, the anthropologist Mary Douglas noted the rigidity of earlier functionalist analyses, which tended to rely upon a single paradigm to explain witchcraft accusations—moving from the argument that witchcraft beliefs maintain a social system, to accounts that saw an increase in witchcraft accusations as symptoms of a general breakdown of society.[85] In her search for a new paradigm, Douglas observed how the work of historians, with their more long-term perspective, and anthropologists, analyzing living cultures "in microscopic detail" could inform each other, and highlighted the possibilities of locating cross-cultural patterns as well as emphasizing the importance of paying attention to cultural specificity.[86]

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and "witchcraft." Other anthropologists, working in African, have found the distinction to be less clear (see above, n. 76); on the use of terminology see further n. 2 above.

83 P. Brown, "Sorcery, Demons," 25.

84 R. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours* (London: Harper Collins, 1996); M. Douglas, "Introduction," in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, xxiv and xxv. See also Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*, 11, and A. Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 67 for similar observations about accusations of magical aggression in Cameroon and South Africa, respectively.

85 M. Douglas, "Introduction," xiii–xix. Her analysis did not abandon a functional analysis altogether, finding it a useful explanatory framework so long as it was sufficiently flexible and sophisticated to take account of different social structures.

86 Douglas's brief analysis posited that cross-cultural commonalities of witchcraft accusations should be analyzed on two levels—the individual and the community. For example, individuals use the accusation of witchcraft as a weapon of attack "where relationships are ambiguous": the relationships may be competitive or "it may be that some class of persons comes into an altogether anomalous position of advantage or disadvantage so that the umbrella of community protection is withdrawn from them." If witchcraft suspicions and accusations always first occur at an individual level, she goes on, what may then

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Historical and anthropological studies have continued to pursue the figure of the malevolent magical practitioner, usually in terms of "the witch," across time and place—and the desire to make cross-cultural comparisons has waxed and waned.[87] The search for generalities can, of course, risk the loss of crucial specifics, including age, gender, status, social organization and practice, which reflect the socio-cultural structures of a particular society. Nevertheless, as more recent work in anthropology has argued, the pervasiveness of beliefs in malevolent magic and its practitioners is part of what makes them so compelling. Drawing out parallels and patterns may, in fact, help to highlight crucial differences, making assumptions explicit, and underlining local meanings that go beyond the question of "witchcraft" into more far-reaching cultural questions: "Witchcraft is more than a mere social construction; it is about power and inequality, individual and collective interests, the parameters of belief and action, the conditions of knowing, and the criteria of knowledge. It is about the manner in which people apprehend the world and the way in which they attempt to interpret and explain it."[88] Indeed, recently, some scholars have suggested that "witchcraft" may be a conceptual and analytical category equivalent to (and potentially more useful than) gender or "other."[89]

4 Conclusion: The Discourses of Magic

Sarapammon's spell has lasted. Well over a thousand years after he buried his doll, that object still exerts an eerie fascination: for whom did it have meaning, and why; what was that meaning? Similarly, discussion of Apuleius' trial continues, and exploration of the hostilities evoked by and with accusations of supernatural aggression. These are just two illustrations of the resilience of magic—or rather of certain discourses concerned with magic. This essay has explored some aspects of two of those discourses, which seek to shed light on

happen at the community level depends on "the state of community politics and on what pattern of relationships needs redefining at the time." (Douglas, "Introduction," xxv).

87 R. Hutton, "Anthropological and Historical Approaches to Witchcraft: Potential for a New Collaboration?," *The Historical Journal* 47, 2 (2004): 413–34, and for a broad, but detailed historical overview of the study of witches and witchcraft, see R. Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear from Ancient Times to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

88 G. Bond and D. Ciekawy, *Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), 25.

89 Rowlands, "Usual Suspects?," Gaskill, "Masculinity and Witchcraft," 184, and L. Kounine, "The Gendering of Witchcraft: Defence Strategies of Men and Women in German Witchcraft Trials," *German History* 31 (2013): 299.

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social tensions in ancient society, mapping out the significance of particular practices and activities. By means of these discourses, we can see how both the practice of magic and accusations of magical practice can provide a role for human agency in otherwise inexplicable or uncontrollable events. Whether the users are practitioners of magic or accuse others of magic-working, magic offers them a tool for participating more effectively in social interaction, making and shaping relationships, gaining power. For the scholar, these discourses about magic shine some light on hidden social interactions, allowing a glimpse of otherwise implicit individual and group dynamics, including suspicions, fears, hopes and desires. As such, "magic" is a term that, although rich with meaning, can acquire a precise definition only in context. It is not so much a specific entity as a heuristic tool: it describes the relationship between certain belief systems/ritual practices with networks of social and political power, within a particular culture, at a particular time and place.

However, we must not forget the role of the interpreter of these discourses of magic, an interpreter who is, in turn, also located within a particular culture, and specific social setting. As we have noted above, the academic discourse of magic experiences its own trends. So, for example, Douglas noted the drawbacks of previous paradigms of research; more recently, some scholars have argued that social explanations of witchcraft accusations tend not to consider the violence of these phenomena.[90] The stories we can tell about our evidence are forged from our own assumptions: thus, for example, magic may not be the desperate act of the underdog, as we may like to imagine, but a form of empowerment for marginal groups in response to oppressive social structures or norms.[91] Again, the difficulties of drawing a firm line between a city's/community's religious activity and an individual's magical action indicates the subjective nature of these terms, which are often used as if stunningly objective.

This point leads to a final observation: this essay has discussed two aspects of ancient life where scholars have identified links between magic and social tension, and the discourses that have developed around these arenas. What has become apparent is how these discourses about magic themselves work magic. They transform object and text into evidence for seething emotions, captivating the reader with plausible accounts of competition, anxiety, and

90 J. Siegel, *Naming the Witch* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

91 Cf. R. Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 20, and see T. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic and Witchcraft in Present-day England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism*.

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fear, conjuring ancient hatreds. For example, one of the reasons that we tend to describe city/community activities as religious (even when they resemble the magical rituals of the individual) may lie in the discourse of accusations of malevolent magical practice, in which cities or communities provide (non-magical) solutions or protection against magic, helping to tame and control the elements within them. In this way, the scholar and his object of study are perhaps closer than they first appear: "What appeals most to the imagination is the ease with which the magician achieves his ends. He has the gift of conjuring up more things than any ordinary mortals can dream of. His words, his gestures, his glances, even his thoughts are forces in themselves. His own person emanates influences before which nature and men, spirits and gods must give way."[92]

5 Future Directions

Some suggestions for future themes of study have already cropped up during this paper: for example, the need for reflexivity, not only about the assumptions that guide the application of interpretative models, but also with regard to the models themselves. We need to take care when sorting data into categories, in case this approach means that we fail to see information or explanations that might otherwise emerge from the evidence, and keep in mind the potentially complex and multiple motivations of our ancient writers. Approaches to the study of magic and witchcraft in other periods of history and in other disciplines may offer further inspiration for possible future methodological directions for the study of ancient magic. For example, some early modern historians have moved away from the use of anthropological models to other disciplines, making provocative use of psychoanalytic approaches to try to understand the mindset of those involved in witchcraft trials—both accusers and accused.[93] In turn, cross-cultural work in anthropology has largely drawn on more proximate material to examine the evolution of the figure of the witch in response to ongoing political events.[94] In both these disciplines, there has

92 Mauss and Hubert, *A General Theory of Magic*, 41.

93 D. Purkis, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996); L. Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, sexuality and religion in early modern Europe* (London: Psychology Press, 1994); and L. Roper, *Witch Craze. Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

94 For example, Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft*; Bond and Ciekawy, *Witchcraft Dialogues*; Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence*.

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been an increasing focus on local practice and beliefs rather than a pursuit of overarching monolithic explanations, and a simultaneous insistence that this local focus can only be analysed adequately if it is viewed within its larger socio-political context. Something similar is also happening in the discipline of ancient history, where sufficient evidence allows it. At a 2009 conference on magic, for example, scholars discussed projects for mapping the evidence for magical practices, in an attempt to establish and investigate linguistic diversity in magical texts across place and over time.[95]

Coupling this data with a greater focus on the specific cultural and community context of particular texts could also help to explore and differentiate local patterns of motivation, not only giving insights into the magical activities themselves, but also helping to shed valuable light on questions of social dynamics within particular communities—and how these change over time. This paper has focused largely on magic as a weapon of assault in situations of social tension, but the category of magic does, of course, include other ritual practices, including, for example, protection against supernatural aggression in the form of charms and amulets. As well as understanding how people in different parts of the ancient world, at different times, may have attacked each other using magic and accusations of magic, examining locally and temporally specific modes of self-protection, and how these develop, would increase understanding of both social and divine relationships. The important question of the "materiality of magic" is one that is beginning to be excitingly explored, and can further sharpen our understanding of the ways in which these practices were part of ancient lives.[96]

In all these inquiries, the question of cultural influences requires careful handling. For example, the syncretism of texts of the Imperial period and later can seem baffling: it is necessary to try to tease out the influences of different cultures on each other, to seek the transformation rather than simply the survival of traditions, in order to shed a stimulating and provocative light on this topic.[97] So far, these observations have focused on the phenomena of ritual practice; but the evidence discussed above also concerns *accounts* of aggressive magical practice. The construction and transmission of such narratives is also an important focus of research, most recently explored at a conference on "Narrating Witchcraft: Agency, Discourse and Power", which examined relevant narratives from different times and cultures and the different possible

95 The conference was "I contesti magici nell'antichità", held in Rome, 4–6 November, 2009.

96 See D. Boschung, and J.N. Bremmer, *The Materiality of Magic* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink GmbH & Co. Verlags, 2015), and see above, Frankfurter, Chapter 24.

97 For example, D. Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017).

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theoretical approaches that could be brought to bear in analysis.[98] This raises the question of authority and legitimacy—and introduces a final theme: the increasing integration of research on magical practices with studies of what have traditionally been thought of as religious practices and the incorporation of these two elements more generally in studies in ancient history. The use of ritual practices to provoke or alleviate, protect from or aggravate social tensions can deepen our understanding of local and wider relationships between ancient men and women, and between them and their gods.

Suggested Readings

Eidinow, Esther, "Ancient Greco-Roman Magic and the Agency of Victimhood," *Numen* 64 (2017): 394–417.

Eidinow, Esther, *Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Classical Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 224–53.

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Pachoumi, Eleni, "The Erotic and Separation spells of the Magical Papyri and Defixiones," *GRBS* 53 (2013): 294–352.

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